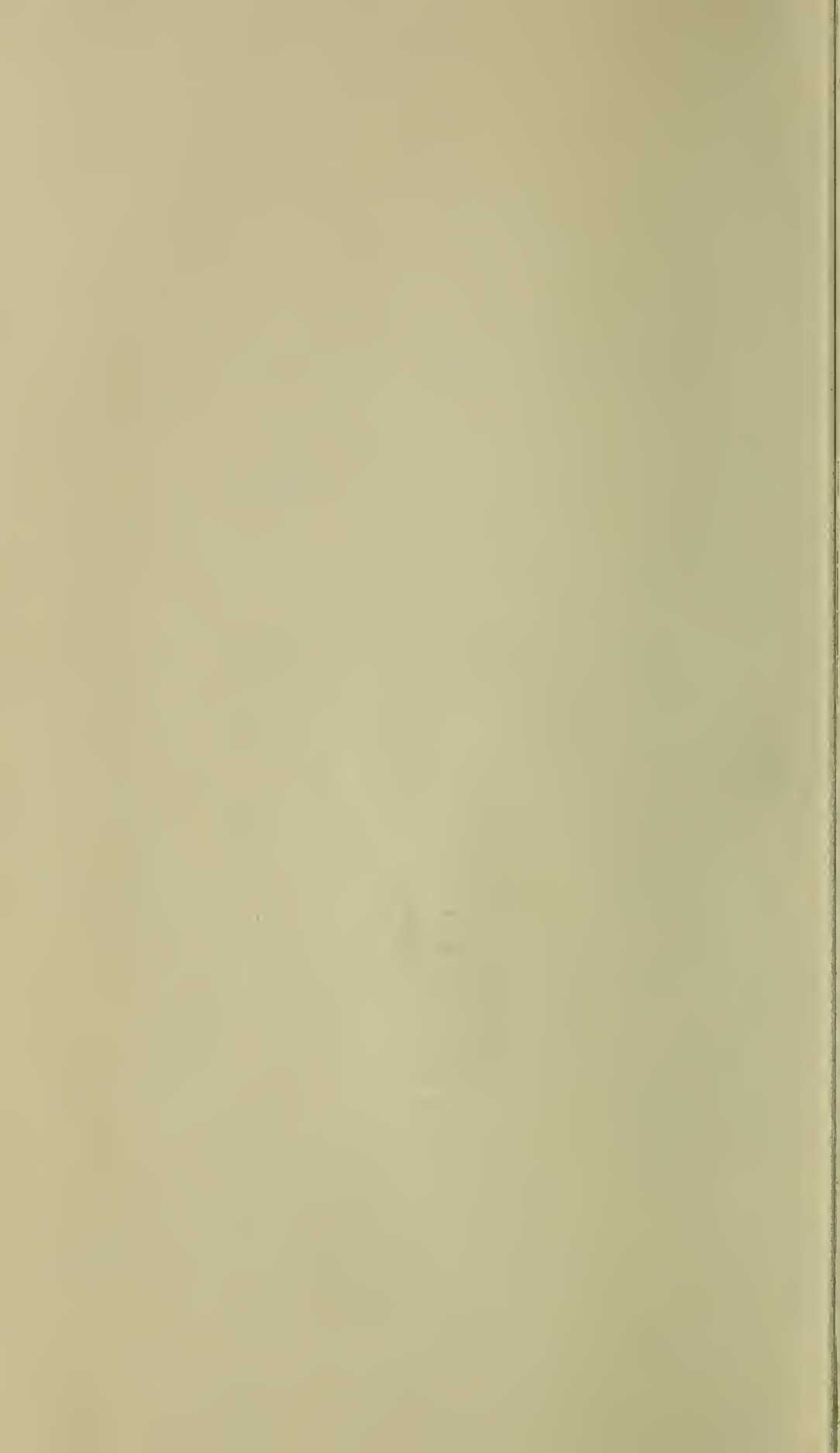


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HOURS WITH THE MYSTICS

VOL. II.

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HOURS WITH THE MYSTICS

A Contribution to the History of
Religious Opinion

By ROBERT ALFRED VAUGHAN, B.A.

FOURTH EDITION.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

BOOK VII.—PERSIAN MYSTICISM IN THE MIDDLE AGE.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
The Sufis ; their Mystical Poetry	3
Mystical Poetry in the West ; Angelus Silesius	5
R. W. Emerson	8

CHAPTER II.

Rabia	10
The Oriental and the Western Mysticism compared	12

BOOK VIII.—THEOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

The Position of the Mystics as regards the Reformation	31
The Advantage of the Ground occupied by Luther	32
Menacing Character of the Revolutionary Mysticism	35
The Anabaptists of Munster	37

CHAPTER II.

Luther and the Mystics	41
The Prophets of Zwickau	44
Carlstadt	44

	PAGE
Sebastian Frank	47
Schwenkfeld	50
Weigel	51

CHAPTER III.

Mysticism and Science	53
The Cabbala	55
Nature studied by the Light of Grace	57
Alchemy	58
Theurgy	59

CHAPTER IV.

Cornelius Agrippa	61
The Science of Sympathies	63
Redemption, Natural and Spiritual	67

CHAPTER V.

Theophrastus Paracelsus	71
Signatures	76
Theological Chemistry	77

CHAPTER VI.

Jacob Behmen and his <i>Aurora</i>	79
Illumination	82
Troubles	86

CHAPTER VII.

Jacob Behmen, his Materials, and Style of Workmanship	90
The Theory of Development by Contraries	92
The Three Gates	95
The <i>Aurora</i>	97

CHAPTER VIII.

Jacob Behmen—Sketch and Estimate of his System	103
The Mysterium Magnum	104
The Seven Fountain-Spirits	104
Examination of his Doctrine concerning the Origin of Evil	109
The Fall	115
Merits of his Theosophy	119

CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
The Rosicrucians	128
Romance and Reality	129
Valentine Andreä and his <i>Fama Fraternitatis</i>	134
Secret Societies	136
The Creatures of the Elements	138
Magical Words	140
Pordage and the Philadelphian Society	142
Joanna Leade	144

BOOK IX.—THE SPANISH MYSTICS.

CHAPTER I.

Neo-Platonism revived in Italy	147
Its Weakness, opposed to the Reformation	148
The Counter-reformation	150
Headed by Spain	150
Character of its Mysticism	151
St. Theresa	153
Her Autobiography	156
The Director	158
Visions	160

CHAPTER II.

Theresa's Four Degrees of Prayer	167
Her Quietism	171

CHAPTER III.

St. John of the Cross	182
His Asceticism	183
His Mystical Night	185
More elevated Character of his Mysticism	193

BOOK X.—QUIETISM.

CHAPTER I.

Queen Quietude	201
The Doctrine of 'Pure Love' discussed	205

	PAGE
Madame Guyon	207
Her Unhappy Marriage	208
The Kingdom of God within us	211
Efforts to Annihilate Self	213
Interior Attraction	216
Madame Guyon and the Romish Saints	218
Confessors and Small-pox	222
The Seven Years of Famine	224
Self-loss in God	227
Mistakes concerning the Nature of Spiritual Influence	230
Reformatory Character of her Mysticism	233
Activity and Persecution	234

CHAPTER II.

The Quietist Controversy	242
Molinos	242
Madame Guyon at Paris	245
St. Cyr	248
Fénélon and Madame Guyon	250
Signs of Danger	252
The Conferences at Issy	255
The Quietism of Fénélon	258
His Critical Position	262
Writes the <i>Maxims of the Saints</i>	263
Appeals to Rome	265
Bossuet's <i>Account of Quietism</i>	268
Fénélon's <i>Reply</i>	269
Infallibility submits to Louis	271
Fénélon submits to Infallibility	272
The Controversy reviewed	273
Mysticism in France and in Germany	275

CHAPTER III

Disinterested Love	283
Antoinette Bourignon	285
Peter Poiret	287
Madame de Krüdener	288

BOOK XI.—MYSTICISM IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Britain poor in Mystics	301
George Fox	303
The Early Friends	305
Asceticism	309
Doctrine of the Universal Light	309

CHAPTER II.

Doctrine of Perceptible Guidance	313
The English Platonists	315
Henry More ; Norris of Bemerton	315

BOOK XII.—EMANUEL SWEDENBORG.

CHAPTER I.

Comprehensive Character of his Mysticism	321
Doctrine of Correspondences	323
Stands alone among the Mystics	326

CHAPTER II.

His <i>Memorable Relations</i>	329
His Heaven and Hell	330
Moderation of his Doctrine concerning Spiritual Influence	331
Defects of his Doctrine concerning the Work of Christ	332
The Church of the New Jerusalem	335

BOOK XIII.—CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER I.

Mystical Tendencies of our own Time	340
The Faith-Philosophy	341
Schleiermacher	341
The Romantic School	343
Novalis	348
Revival of antiquated Error	350
The Modern Mysticism a Repetition of the Old	351
The Services of Mysticism	352

	PAGE
Its Dangers !	352
Its Lessons	356

CHAPTER II.

Mysticism fostered by the Supposition of a Separate Religious Faculty	361
Reason, how far amenable to Understanding	362
Historic Reality not opposed to Spirituality	365

CHAPTER III.

A Vision of Mystics	368
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BOOK THE SEVENTH



PERSIAN MYSTICISM IN THE MIDDLE AGE



CHAPTER I.

Also, there is in God
Which being seen would end us with a shock
Of pleasure. It may be that we should die
As men have died of joy, all mortal powers
Summed up and finished in a single taste
Of superhuman bliss ; or, it may be
That our great latent love, leaping at once
A thousand years in stature—like a stone
Dropped to the central fires, and at a touch
Loosed into vapour—should break up the terms
Of separate being, and as a swift rack,
Dissolving into heaven, we should go back
To God.

DOBELL.

THE next day was fine, as well it might be after such a sunset ; to Hawksfell all the party went, and there was no reading. But on the following (sunnier yet, if possible) they assembled immediately after breakfast in the summer-house, Lowestoffe not excepted, for even he grew inactive with the heat, and declared himself content to lie on the grass by the hour. Atherton congratulated his hearers that they would not for some time be troubled with more lucubrations of his—not till they came, in due course, to Madame Guyon. For Willoughby was to take up Jacob Behmen, and Gower, who possessed (as the fruit of an artist's tour) some acquaintance with Spanish, St. Theresa. Then, unrolling his manuscript, he began.

THE SUFIS, OR MYSTICAL POETRY IN THE EAST AND WEST.

Among all the religions of civilized man, it would be difficult to find one more unfriendly to the growth of mysticism than that of Mohammed. Yet in no religion has mysticism spread more widely or raised its head with greater pride. The cold rationalism of the Koran, its ritual minutiae, its formal

self-righteousness, its prohibition of the monastic order,—all combined to warn the mystic from the religious domain of the Crescent. But stronger than Mohammedan orthodoxy or the dying commands of the Prophet were the wants of the human heart and the spirit of an eastern people. The generation which laid Mohammed in the holy earth of Medîna saw monastic institutions arise and multiply on every side. Mystical interpretation could with ease elude the less favourable passages of the Koran, and turn others into a warrant. With a single touch of this dexterous pencil, the mystic could make the Prophet's portraiture all he desired, and turn the frown into a smile. The fatalism of the creed of Islam would furnish a natural basis for the holy indifference of Quietism.

Each succeeding century of the Hegira was found more abundant than the last in a class of men who revolted against the letter in the name of the spirit, and who aspired to a converse and a unity with God such as the Koran deemed unattainable on this side heaven. The names of the saints and martyrs, the poets and philosophers, of mysticism, are among the brightest in the hagiography and the literature of the Mohammedan world. The achievements of the former class are adorned with legendary extravagances such as those with which the Prophet delighted to invest himself. The philosophy of the latter (whether sung or said) was not a little aided, in its contest with rigid orthodoxy, by the Grecian learning of that Alexandria which fell, in the first outbreak of Moslem zeal, before the hosts of Amrou. In later times (under the names of Plato and of Aristotle) mysticism and method did battle with each other, in the East as in the West,—at Shiraz, at Bagdad, or at Cordova, even as in the University of Paris or the academies of Italy.

The term Sufism appears to be a general designation for the mystical asceticism of the Mohammedan faith. The Sufis cannot be said to constitute a distinct sect, or to embrace any particu-

lar philosophical system. Their varieties are endless; their only common characteristics a claim of some sort to a superhuman commerce with the Supreme,—mystical rapture, mystical union, mystical identity, or theurgic powers;—and a life of ascetic observance. The name is given to mystics of every shade, from the sage to the quack, from poets like Saadi or philosophers like Algazzali, to the mendicant dervise or the crazy fanatic.

Persia has been for several centuries the great seat of Sufism. For two hundred years (during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of our era) the descendants of a Sufi occupied the throne,—governing, however, as may be supposed, not like mystics, but as men of the world.¹ It is with Sufism as exhibited principally by the Sufi poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, that I propose now to occupy your attention.

It will be found worth our while, as we proceed, to compare the mystical poetry of the East and West. Oriental mysticism has become famous by its poets; and into poetry it has thrown all its force and fire. The mysticism of the West has produced prophecies and interpretations of prophecy; soliloquies, sermons, and treatises of divinity;—it has found solace in autobiography, and breathed out its sorrow in hymns;—it has essayed, in earnest prose, to revive and to reform the sleeping Church;—but it has never elaborated great poems. In none of the languages of Europe has mysticism achieved the success which crowned it in Persia, and prevailed to raise and rule the poetic culture of a nation. Yet the occidental mysticism has not been wholly lacking in poets of its own order. The seventeenth century can furnish one, and the nineteenth another,—Angelus Silesius and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The latest research has succeeded only in deciding who Angelus Silesius was *not*. Some Roman Catholic priest or monk, assuming the name of Angelus, did, in the seventeenth century,

¹ Malcolm's *Persia*, vol. ii., p. 383.

send forth sundry hymns and religious poems,—among others, one most euphuistically entitled *The Cherubic Wanderer*. The author of this book has been generally identified, on grounds altogether inadequate, with a contemporary named John Scheffler,—a renegade from Jacob Behmen to the Pope. Suffice it to say that no two men could be more unlike than the virulent fagotty-minded pervert Scheffler, and the contemplative pantheistic Angelus—be he who he may.²

The Cherubic Wanderer is a collection of religious epigrams or rhyming sentences, most of them smart and pithy enough as to expression, not a few as destitute of sense as they all are of poetry. The Wanderer travelled a little way into the eighteenth century, and then, lighting upon one of those oblivious arbours so fatal to pilgrims, sat down, and slept long. A few years ago some Romanticist littérateurs of Germany woke him up, and announced to the world, with much sounding of brass and tinkling of cymbals, that they had resuscitated a paragon of saintship and philosophy.

The Silesian's book reiterates the customary utterances of mysticism. But a harsher tone is audible, and the doctrines with which we are familiar appear in a more startling and paradoxical form. The more dangerous elements are intensified. Pantheism is latent no longer. Angelus loves to play at a kind

² See Schrader's *Angelus Silesius und seine Mystik*; Halle, 1853. This author shows, that the supposition identifying Scheffler with Angelus (copied too readily by one writer from another) may be traced up to a source of very slight authority. Scheffler repudiated mysticism after entering the Romish communion. Furious polemical treatises by Scheffler, and sentimental religious poems by Angelus appeared contemporaneously during a considerable interval. Had Scheffler published anything mystical during his controversy, his Protestant antagonists would not have failed to charge

him with it. With Scheffler the Church is everything. In the *Wanderer* of Angelus the word scarcely occurs. The former lives in externalisms; the latter covets escape from them. The one is an angry bigot; the other, for a Romanist, serenely latitudinarian. Characteristics so opposite, urges Dr. Schrader, could not exist in the same man at the same time.

The epithet '*Cherubic*' indicates the more speculative character of the book; as contrasted, in the language of the mystics, with the devotion of feeling and passion—*seraphic* love.

of intellectual seesaw with the terms Finite and Infinite, and their subject or kindred words. Now mounts one side, now the other, of the restless antithesis. Each factor is made to share with its rival every attribute of height or lowness. His favourite style of talking may run as follows:—‘I cannot do without God, nor He without me; He is as small as I, and I as great as He:—let time be to thee as eternity, and eternity as time; the All as nothing, and nothing as the All; then thou hast solved life’s problem, and art one with God, above limit and distinction.’ We matter-of-fact folk feel irresistibly inclined to parody such an oracle, and say,—‘Let whole and part, black and white, be convertible terms;—let thy head be to thee as thy heels, and thy heels as thy head; and thou hast transcended the conditions of vulgar men, and lapsed to Limbo irretrievably.’ Silesius, as a good churchman, repudiates, of course, the charge of pantheism. He declares that the dissolution in Deity he contemplates does not necessitate the loss of personality, or confound the Maker and the made. His distinction is distinguishable ‘as water is in water.’ He appeals to the strong language he hunts out from Bernard, Tauler, and Ruysbroek. But the cold-blooded epigram cannot claim the allowance due to the fervid sermon or the often rhapsodical volume of devotion. Extravagant as the Sufi, he cannot plead like him a spiritual intoxication. Crystals and torrents must have separate laws. And which, moreover, of the mystical masters to whom Angelus refers us would have indited such presumptuous doggrel as this?

God in my nature is involved,

As I in the divine;

I help to make his being up,

As much as he does mine.

As much as I to God owes God to me

• His blissfulness and self-sufficiency.

I am as rich as God, no grain of dust

That is not mine too,—share with me he must.

More than his love unto himself,
 God's love to me hath been ;
 If more than self I too love him,
 We twain are quits, I ween.³

On the other hand, there are many terse and happy couplets and quatrains in the *Wanderer*, which express the better spirit of mysticism. Angelus insists constantly on the vanity of mere externals,—the necessity of a Christ formed within, as opposed to a dead, unsanctifying faith,—the death of self-will, as the seat of all sin,—the reality of the hell or heaven already wrought in time by sin or holiness. These were the maxims and ejaculations which religious minds, mystically inclined, found so edifying. The arrogant egotheism of some passages they took in another sense, or deemed the sense beyond them. Moreover, the high-flown devotion affected by Rome has always familiarized her children with expressions which (as Thomas Fuller has it) ‘do knock at the door of blasphemy, though not always with intent to enter in thereat.’

The second representative of the West, who must assist towards our comparative estimate of pantheistic mysticism in its poetical form, is Mr. Emerson, the American essayist. Whether in prose or verse he is chief singer of his time at the high court of Mysticism. He belongs more to the East than to the West—true brother of those Sufis with whose doctrine he has so much in common. Luxuriant in fancy, impulsive, dogmatic, darkly oracular, he does not reason. His majestic monologue may not be interrupted by a question. His inspiration disdains argument. He delights to lavish his varied and brilliant resources upon some defiant paradox—and never more than when that paradox is engaged in behalf of an optimism extreme enough to provoke another Voltaire to write another *Candide*. He displays in its perfection the fantastic incoherence of the ‘God-intoxicated’ man.

³ *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*, i. 100, 9, 18 ; Schrader, p. 28.

In comparing Emerson with the Sufis, it may be as well to state that he does not believe in Mohammed and receive the Koran in a manner which would satisfy an orthodox Mussulman. Yet he does so (if words have meaning) much after the same fashion in which he believes in Christ and receives the Bible. Mohammed and Jesus are both, to him, extraordinary religious geniuses—the Bible and the Koran both antiquated books. He looks with serene indifference on all the forms of positive religion. He would agree perfectly with those Sufis who proclaimed the difference between the Church and the Mosque of little moment. The distance between the Crescent and the Cross is, with him, one of degree—their dispute rather a question of individual or national taste than a controversy between a religion with evidence and a religion without.

In the nineteenth century, and in America, the doctrine of emanation and the ascetic practice of the East can find no place. But the pantheism of Germany is less elevated than that of Persia, in proportion as it is more developed. The tendency of the latter is to assign reality only to God; the tendency of the former is to assign reality only to the mind of man. The Sufi strove to lose humanity in Deity; Emerson dissolves Deity in humanity. The orientals are nearer to theism, and the moderns farther from it, than they sometimes seem. That primal Unity which the Sufi, like the Neo-Platonist, posits at the summit of all things, to ray forth the world of Appearance, may possibly retain some vestige of personality. But the Over-Soul of Emerson, whose organs of respiration are men of genius, can acquire personality only in the individual man. The Persian aspired to reach a divinity above him by self-conquest; the American seeks to realize a divinity within him by self-will. Self-annihilation is the watchword of the one; self-assertion that of the other.

CHAPTER II.

Und so lang du das nicht hast
Dieses : Stirb und werde !
Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
Auf der dunkeln Erde.¹

GOETHE.

‘LET us proceed, then,’ resumed Atherton, smoothing his manuscript, ‘on our Persian expedition. Dr. Tholuck, with his German translation, shall act as interpreter, and we may pause now and then on our way to listen to the deliverances of the two men of vision who accompany us from Breslau and from Boston.’

The first century of the Hegira has scarcely expired when a mysticism, strikingly similar to that of Madame Guyon, is seen to arise spontaneously in the devout ardours of a female saint named Rabia.² There is the same straining after indifference and self-abnegation—after a love absolutely disinterested—after a devotion beyond language and above means.

By the sick-bed of Rabia stood two holy men. One of them said, ‘The prayers of that man are not sincere who refuses to bear the chastening strokes of the Lord.’ The other went beyond him, saying, ‘He is not sincere who does not rejoice in them.’ Rabia, detecting something of self in that very joy, surpassed them both as she added, ‘He is not sincere who does not, beholding his Lord, become totally unconscious of them.’ The Mohammedan *Lives of the Saints* records that, on another occasion, when questioned concerning the cause of a severe ill-

¹ And if thy heart know nought of this—‘Die that thou mayest be born ;’ then walkest thou the darksome earth a sojourner forlorn.

² Tholuck, *Ssufismus, sive Theosophia Persarum pantheistica* (Berlin, 1822), pp. 51—54.

ness, she replied, 'I suffered myself to think on the delights of Paradise, and therefore my Lord hath punished me.' She was heard to exclaim, 'What is the Kaaba to me? I need God only.' She declared herself the spouse of Heaven,—described her will and personality as lost in God. When asked how she had reached this state, she made the very answer we have heard a German mystic render, 'I attained it when everything which I had found I lost again in God.' When questioned as to the mode, she replied, 'Thou, Hassan, hast found Him by reason and through means; I immediately, without mode or means.'

The seeds of Sufism are here. This mystical element was fostered to a rapid growth through succeeding centuries, in the East as in the West, by the natural reaction of religious fervour against Mohammedan polemics and Mohammedan scholasticism.

In the ninth century of our era, Sufism appears divided between two distinguished leaders, Bustami and Juneid. The former was notorious chiefly for the extravagance of his mystical insanity. The men of genius who afterwards made the name of Sufism honourable, and the language of its aspiration classical, shrank from such coarse excess. It was not enough for Bustami to declare that the recognition of our personal existence was an idolatry, the worst of crimes. It was not enough for him to maintain that when man adores God, God adores himself. He claimed such an absorption in his pantheistic deity as identified him with all the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the universe. He would say, 'I am a sea without bottom, without beginning, without end. I am the throne of God, the word of God. I am Gabriel, Michael, Israfil; I am Abraham, Moses, Jesus.'

If Epiphanius is to be believed, the Messalians were a sect chargeable with the very same folly. If asked, he says, con-

cerning a patriarch, a prophet, an angel, or Christ, they would reply, 'I am that patriarch, that prophet, that angel; I am Christ.'

A reference to Emerson's Essay on History renders such professions perfectly credible. Bustami and the Messalians could not have made them in the literal, but (by anticipation) in the Emersonian sense. They believed, with him, that 'there is one mind common to all individual men.' They find in him their interpreter, when he says, 'Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only sovereign agent.' Emerson couches their creed in modern rhymes, as he sings exultant,—

I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakspeare's strain.

In the spirit of the same philosophy, Angelus Silesius hints at the possibility of such an empire. He reminds his readers that there is no greatness which makes the glory of the past that may not be realized by themselves in the present. Thus he asks—

Dost prize alone King Solomon as wisest of the wise?
Thou also canst be Solomon, and all his wisdom thine.³

But what is only potential with him is claimed as actual by mystical brethren bolder yet than he.

The first endeavour of the Sufi (as of so many Christian mystics) is to achieve that simplifying, purifying process which shall remove from the mind everything earthly and human—all its creaturely accidents, and reduce it to that abstract essence which mirrors Deity, and is itself ultimately divine. An apologue in the *Mesnevi* of Jelaleddin Rumi (a Sufi poet who wrote in the first half of our thirteenth century) teaches this doctrine quite in the oriental manner.

³ Tholuck, *Ssufismus*, p. 63. *Cherub. Wand.*, ii. 18.

The Greeks and the Chinese dispute before a certain sultan as to which of the two nations is the more skilful in the art of decoration. The sultan assigns to the rival painters two structures, facing each other, on which they shall exercise their best ability, and determine the question of precedence by the issue :—

The Chinese ask him for a thousand colours,
 All that they ask he gives right royally ;
 And every morning from his treasure-house
 A hundred sorts are largely dealt them out.
 The Greeks despise all colour as a stain—
 Effacing every hue with nicest care.
 Brighter and brighter shines their polished front,
 More dazzling, soon, than gleams the floor of heaven.
 This hueless sheen is worth a thousand dyes,—
 This is the moon—they but her cloudy veil ;
 All that the cloud is bright or golden with
 Is but the lending of the moon or sun.
 And now, at length, are China's artists ready.
 The cymbals clang—the sultan hastens thither,
 And sees enrapt the glorious gorgeousness—
 Smit nigh to swooning by those beamy splendours.—
 Then, to the Grecian palace opposite.
 Just as the Greeks have put their curtain back,
 Down glides a sunbeam through the rifted clouds,
 And, lo, the colours of that rainbow house
 Shine, all reflected on those glassy walls
 That face them, rivalling : the sun hath painted
 With lovelier blending, on that stony mirror
 The colours spread by man so artfully.
 Know then, O friend ! such Greeks the Sufis are,
 Owning nor book nor master ; and on earth
 Having one sole and simple task,—to make
 Their hearts a stainless mirror for their God.
 Is thy heart clear and argent as the moon ?
 Then imaged there may rest, innumerable,
 The forms and hues of heaven.⁴

So, too, says Angelus Silesius,—

Away with accidents and false appearance,
 Thou must be essence all, and colourless.

And again,—

Man ! wouldst thou look on God, in heaven or while yet here,
 Thy heart must first of all become a mirror clear.⁵

⁴ Tholuck, *Blüthensammlung aus der Morgenländischen Mystik* (Berlin, 1825), p. 114.

⁵ *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 274 ; v. 81.

Jelaleddin Rumi describes the emancipation of the soul from intellectual distinctions—the laws of finite thought, the fluctuations of hope and fear, the consciousness of personality,—under the image of night. This has been the favourite and appropriate symbol of all the family of mystics, from Dionysius, with his ‘Divine Darkness,’ to John of the Cross, in his *De Nocte Obscurâ*, and on to Novalis, in his *Hymnen an der Nacht*. In the following vigorous passage, Night is equivalent to the state of self-abandonment and self-transcendence :—

Every night God frees the host of spirits—
 Makes them clear as tablets smooth and spotless—
 Frees them every night from fleshy prison.
 Then the soul is neither slave nor master,
 Nothing knows the bondman of his bondage,
 Nothing knows the lord of all his lordship,
 Gone from such a night is eating sorrow,
 Gone the thoughts that question good and evil.
 Then, without distraction or division,
 In the One the spirit sinks and slumbers.

Silesius has the same thought, cold and dry, after the poetic Persian, yet in words that would furnish no inapt motto to express in a sentence this species of mysticism :—

Ne’er sees man in this life, the Light above all light,
 As when he yields him up to darkness and to night⁶

The ascetic Sufi bids the mystical aspirant close the senses against every external impression—for the worlds of sense and of contemplation reciprocally exclude each other. We have seen how the Hindoos and the Hesychasts endeavoured literally to obey this counsel, reiterated so often by so many mystagogues :—

Put wool within the ear of flesh, for that
 Makes deaf the inner hearing, as with wool ;
 If that can hear, the spirit’s ear is deaf.
 Let sense make blind no more the spirit’s eye.
 Be without ear, without a sense or thought,
 Hark only to the voice, ‘ Home, wanderer, home !’

It is quite in accordance with such precepts that the judging

⁶ *Blüthen.*, p. 61. *Cherub. Wand.*, iv. 23.

faculty should be abandoned by the Sufi for the intuitive, and the understanding sacrificed to the feeling. According to the Koran, Mohammed once soared heavenwards, to such a height that Gabriel could not overtake him, and far off below, appeared to the Prophet no larger than a sparrow. Jelaleddin compares the heart, the divine principle in man (the spirit, in his psychology), to Mohammed, and the understanding to Gabriel. Names and words, he says, are but 'nets and shackles.' With justice, in one sense, he bids men pass from the sign to the thing signified, and asks,—

Didst ever pluck a rose from R and O and S?
Names thou mayst know : go, seek the truth they name ;
Search not the brook, but heaven, to find the moon.

The senses and the lower powers, nourished by *forms*, belong to earth, and constitute the mere foster-mother of our nature. The intuitive faculty is a ray of Deity, and beholds Essence. The soul which follows its divine parent is therefore a wonder, and often a scandal to that which recognises only the earthly. Jelaleddin compares the rapturous plunge of the soul into its divine and native element to the hastening of the ducklings into the water, to the terror of the hen that hatched them.⁷

While exulting in a devotion above all means and modes, we find the Sufi (in nearly every stage of his ascension save the last) yielding implicit obedience to some human guide of his own choice. The Persian Pir was to him what the Director was to the Quietist or semi-Quietist of France; what the experienced Friend of God was to the mystic of Cologne or Strasburg; what Nicholas of Basle was so long to Tauler. That a voluntary submission to such authority was yielded is certain. Yet we find scarcely an allusion to these spiritual guides among the chief bards of Sufism. Each singer claims or seeks a knowledge of God which is immediate, and beyond the need of at

⁷ *Blüthen.*, pp. 64, 71, 113, 156.

least the orthodox and customary aids and methods. Thus Rumi says—

He needs a guide no longer who hath found
The way already leading to the Friend.
Who stands already on heaven's topmost dome
Needs not to search for ladders. He that lies,
Folded in favour on the sultan's breast,
Needs not the letter or the messenger.

So Emerson,—

‘The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. . . . Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, then old things pass away,—means, teachers, texts, temples, fall; it lives now and absorbs past and future into the present hour.’⁸

Hence, in both cases, the indifference before noticed to all the various forms of positive religion. The Persian describes all religions as the same liquor in different glasses—all are poured by God into one mighty beaker.

The self-abandonment and self-annihilation of the Sufis rest on the basis of their pantheism. Personal existence is with them the great illusion of this world of appearance—to cling to it is to be blind and guilty. Mahmud (a Sufi of the fourteenth century) says, in the *Gulschen Ras*,—

All sects but multiply the I and Thou ;
This I and Thou belong to partial being ;
When I and Thou and several being vanish,
Then Mosque and Church shall bind thee never more.
Our individual life is but a phantom :
Make clear thine eye, and see Reality !

Again, (though here the sense may be moral rather than philosophic, and selfishness, not personality, abjured)—

Go, soul ! with Moses to the wilderness,
And hear with him that grand ‘I am the Lord !’
While, like a mountain that shuts out the sun,
Thine I lifts up its head, thou shalt not see Me.
The lightning strikes the mountain into ruins,
And o’er the levelled dust the glory leaps !

⁸ *Blüthen.*, p. 167. Emerson's *Essays* (1848), p. 35.

Jelaleddin says of the Sufi in his self-abnegation,—

His love of God doth, like a flame of hell,
Even in a moment swallow love of self.

Mahmud, to express the same thought, employs the image used by Thomas à Kempis :—

The path from *Me* to God is truly found,
When pure that *Me* from Self as clearest flame from smoke.

Angelus Silesius bids men lose, in utter Nihilism, all sense of any existence separate from the Divine Substance—the Absolute :—

While aught thou art or know'st or lov'st or hast,
Not yet, believe me, is thy burden gone.

Who is as though he were not—ne'er had been—
That man, oh joy ! is made God absolute.

Self is surpassed by self-annihilation ;
The nearer nothing, so much more divine.⁹

Thus individuality must be ignored to the utmost ; by mystical death we begin to live ; and in this perverted sense he that loseth his life shall find it. Hence, by a natural consequence, the straining after a sublime apathy almost as senseless as the last abstraction of the Buddhist. The absolutely disinterested love, to which the Sufi aspires, assumes, however, an aspect of grandeur as opposed to the sensuous hopes and fears of Mohammed's heaven and hell. Rumi thus describes the blessedness of those whose will is lost in the will of God :—

They deem it crime to flee from Destiny,
For Destiny to them brings only sweetness.
Welcome is all that ever can beal them,
For were it fire it turns to living waters.
The poison melts to sugar on their lip ;
The mire they tread is lustrous diamond,
And weal and woe alike, whatever comes.
They and their kingdom lie in God's divineness.
To pray, 'O Lord, turn back this trouble from me,'
They count an insult to the hand that sent it.

* * * *

⁹ *Blüthen.*, pp. 204-206. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 24, 92, 140.

Faithful they are, but not for Paradise ;
 God's will the only crowning of their faith :
 And not for seething hell, flee they from sin,
 But that their will must serve the Will Divine.
 It is not struggle, 'tis not discipline,
 Wins them a will so restful and so blest ;—
 It is that God from his heart-fountain ever
 Fills up their jubilant souls.

So, again, Angelus Silesius, sometimes pushing his negation to unconscious caricature :—

True hero he that would as readily
 Be left without God as enjoy him near.

Self-loss finds God—to let God also go,
 That is the real, most rare abandonment.

Man! whilst thou thankest God for this or that,
 Yet art thou slave to finite feebleness.

Not fully God's is he who cannot live,
 Even in hell, and find in hell no hell.

Nought so divine as to let nothing move thee,
 Here or hereafter (could'st thou only reach it).

Who loves without emotion, and without knowledge knows,
 Of him full fitly say we—he is more God than man.

Compare Emerson, discoursing of Intuition and the height to which it raises men :—

'Fear and hope are alike beneath it. It asks nothing. There is somewhat low even in hope. We are then in vision. There is nothing that can be called gratitude nor properly joy. The soul is raised over passion,' &c. So, again : 'Prayer as a means to effect a private end is theft and meanness. It supposes dualism in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God he will not beg. He will then see prayer in all action.'¹⁰

This elevation above petition and above desire, towards which many a Sufi toiled, watching, fasting, solitary, through the 'seven valleys' of mystic discipline, is cheaply accomplished

¹⁰ *Blüthen.*, pp. 180, 181. *Cherub. Wand.*, v. 367; ii. 92; i. 91, 39; ii. 152, 59. Emerson, pp. 37, 42.

now-a-days by mere nonchalance, and is hit off by a flourish of the pen. It is the easy boast of any one who finds prayer distasteful and scoffs at psalm-singing—who chooses to dub his money-getting with the title of worship, and fancies that to follow instinct is to follow God. The most painful self-negation and the most facile self-indulgence meet at the same point and claim the same pre-eminence.

The eastern mystic ignores humanity to attain divinity. The ascent and the descent are proportionate, and the privileges of nothingness are infinite. We must accompany the Sufi to his highest point of deification, and in that transcendental region leave him. His escape from the finite limitations of time and space is thus described,—

On earth thou seest his outward, but his spirit
Makes heaven its tent and all infinity.
Space and Duration boundless do him service,
As Eden's rivers dwell and serve in Eden.

Again, Said, the servant, thus recounts one morning to Mohammed the ecstasy he has enjoyed :—

My tongue clave fever-dry, my blood ran fire,
My nights were sleepless with consuming love,
Till night and day sped past—as flies a lance
Grazing a buckler's rim ; a hundred faiths
Seemed then as one ; a hundred thousand years
No longer than a moment. In that hour
All past eternity and all to come
Was gathered up in one stupendous *Now*,—
Let understanding marvel as it may.
Where men see clouds, on the ninth heaven I gaze,
And see the throne of God. All heaven and hell
Are bare to me and all men's destinies,
The heavens and earth, they vanish at my glance :
The dead rise at my look. I tear the veil
From all the worlds, and in the hall of heaven
I set me central, radiant as the sun.
Then spake the Prophet :—' Friend, thy steed is warm ;
Spur him no more. The mirror in thy breast
Did slip its fleshly case, now put it up—
Hide it once more, or thou wilt come to harm.'

This magniloquence of Said's is but the vehement poetic expression for the 'absolute intuition' of modern Germany—

that identity of subject and object in which all limitations and distinctions vanish, and are absorbed in an indescribable transcendental intoxication. If the principle be true at all, its most lofty and unqualified utterance must be the best, and what seems to common-sense the thorough-going madness of the fiery Persian is preferable to the colder and less consistent language of the modern Teutonic mysticism. Quite in the spirit of the foregoing extracts, Emerson laments that we do not oftener realize this identity, and transcend time and space as we ought.—

‘We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related,—the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.’ And again :—‘Time and space are but inverse measures of the force of the soul. A man is capable of abolishing them both. The spirit sports with time—

‘Can crowd eternity into an hour
Or stretch an hour to eternity.’

So Angelus Silesius :—

Rise above Space and Time, and thou canst be
At any moment in Eternity.¹¹

The following passage from Jelaleddin exhibits the kind of identity with God claimed by the more extravagant devotees of Sufism :—

Are we fools, we’re God’s captivity ;
Are we wise, we are his promenade ;
Are we sleeping, we are drunk with God ;
Are we waking, then we are his heralds ;
Are we weeping, then his clouds of wrath ;
Are we laughing, flashes of his love.

¹¹ *Blüthen.*, pp. 85, 116. Emerson, pp. 141, 143. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 12.

Compare *Richard of St. Victor*, cited above, vol. i., p. 172, Note to p. 163.

Some among them carried their presumption to a practical extreme which did away with all distinction between good and evil. They declared the sins of the Sufi dearer to God than the obedience of other men, and his impiety more acceptable than their faith.¹²

Two extracts more will suffice to show the mode in which this pantheistic mysticism confounds, at its acme, the finite and the infinite. They are from Feridoddin Attar, who died in the second or third decade of the fourteenth century.—

Man, what thou art is hidden from thyself.
Know'st not that morning, mid-day, and the eve,
All are within thee? The ninth heaven art thou;
And from the spheres into this roar of time
Didst fall erewhile. Thou art the brush that painted
The hues of all this world—the light of life,
That rayed its glory on the nothingness.

Joy! joy! I triumph! Now no more I know
Myself as simply me, I burn with love
Unto myself, and bury me in love.
The Centre is within me, and its wonder
Lies as a circle everywhere about me.
Joy! joy! no mortal thought can fathom me.
I am the merchant and the pearl at once.
Lo, time and space lie crouching at my feet.
Joy! joy! when I would revel in a rapture,
I plunge into myself and all things know.

The poet then introduces Allah, as saying that he had cast Attar into a trance, and withdrawn him into his own essence, so that the words he uttered were the words of God.¹³

¹² *Blüthen.*, pp. 82, 84.—The truth, to is the abuse, is well put by
of which the licentious doctrine alluded Angelus,—

‘Dearer to God the good man’s very sleep
Than prayers and psalms of sinners all night long.’—(v. 334.)

¹³ *Blüthen.*, pp. 266, 260.—Never there somewhat similar imagery for
does this soaring idealism become so the same thought. What is with him
definite and apprehensible as when it a dry skeleton acquires flesh and blood
speaks with the ‘large utterance’ of among the Orientals.
the Sufis. Angelus has here and

‘Sit in the centre, and thou seest at once
What is, what was; all here and all in heaven.

‘Is my will dead? Then what I will God must,
And I prescribe his pattern and his end.

‘I must be sun myself, and with my beams
Paint all the hueless ocean of the Godhead.’—(ii. 183; i. 98, 115.)

Both with Emerson and Angelus, he who truly apprehends God becomes a part of the divine nature,—is a son, a god in God, according to the latter; and according to the former, grows into an organ of the Universal Soul. This notion of identity Emerson seems to arrive at from the human; Angelus from the divine side. The salvation of man is reduced with the German, very much to a process of divine development. With the American, every elevated thought merges man for a time in the Oversoul. The idealism of Emerson is more subjective, his pantheism more complete and consequent. Angelus is bold on the strength of a theory of redemption which makes man necessary to God. Emerson is bolder yet, on his own account, for he makes his own God. This he does when he adores his own ideal, and, expanding Self to Universality, falls down and worships.

Hear him describe this transcendental devotion :—

‘The simplest person, who in his integrity worships God, becomes God; yet for ever and ever the influx of this better and universal self is new and unsearchable.’ Again: ‘I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul, and thereby I do overlook the sun and the stars, and feel them to be but the fair accidents and effects which change and pass.’ So, speaking of the contemplation of Nature :—‘I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God,’ &c.

Angelus says, in virtue of his ideal sonship,—

I am as great as God, and he as small as I;
He cannot me surpass, or I beneath him lie.

God cannot, without me, endure a moment’s space,
Were I to be destroyed, he must give up the ghost.

Nought seemeth high to me, I am the highest thing;
Because e’en God himself is poor deprived of me.¹⁴

¹⁴ Emerson, pp. 154, 156, 196. *Cherub. Wand.*, i. 10, 8, 204.—Angelus has

The central idea of the Persian mysticism is *Emanation*. The soul is to escape from the manifold to the One. Its tendency (in proportion as its votary believes that return accomplished) is to confound man with the Father. The leading principle in the mysticism of Eckart and Angelus Silesius is *Incarnation*. Angelus is never weary of reiterating the doctrine that God became man in order that man might become God. He does not labour, like the orientals, to attain deification by ascetic efforts of his own. He has a kind of Mediator. He seems to believe that through Christ, in some way, every man is a divine Son of God, if he will only think so. All he has to do is to realize this sonship; then he becomes, by *Grace*, all that the Son of God is by *Nature*. The obvious result of this mysticism is to identify man with the Son.

In that order of modern mysticism represented by Emerson, the central doctrine is *Inspiration*. In the creative efforts of the poet, in the generalizations of the philosopher, the man of genius speaks as he is moved by the Oversoul. An influx of the universal spirit floods his being and carries him beyond himself. In intuition the finite Ego is identified with the absolute Ego. Humanity is a divine evolution, and each true man (to use Emerson's apt illustration)—a *façade* of Deity. Even Angelus would have acknowledged that it was in some sort through Christ that his boastful sonship became possible. But the believer in the Oversoul will admit no such medium, and owns a debt to Christ much as he owns a debt to various modes of expressing the way in which God realizes his nature in the salvation of men.

'I bear God's image. Would he see himself?

He only can in me, or such as I.

'Meekness is velvet whereon God takes rest :

Art meek, O man?—God owes to thee his pillow.

'I see in God both God and man,

He man and God in me ;

I quench his thirst, and he, in turn,

Helps my necessity.'—(i. 105, 214, 224.)

Shakspeare. Mysticism of this order usurps the office of the Holy Ghost, and directly identifies the spirit of man with the Spirit of God.

Mysticism has always been accustomed to express the transports of its divine passion by metaphors borrowed from the amorous phraseology of earth. It has done this with every variety of taste, from the grossness of some of the most eminent Romanist saints, to the beautiful Platonism of Spenser's Hymns of 'Heavenly Love' and 'Heavenly Beautie.' But nowhere has metaphor branched so luxuriantly into allegory as in the East, and nowhere in the East with such subtilty and such freedom as among the Persian mystics. 'The admiring countrymen of Hafiz, Saadi, and Jami, interpret mystically almost everything they wrote. They underlay these poems everywhere with a system of correspondence whose ingenuity would have done no discredit to Swedenborg himself. Sir William Jones furnishes some specimens of a sort of mystical glossary, by aid whereof their drinking songs may be read as psalms, and their amatory effusions transformed into hymns full of edification for the faithful.¹⁵ Never, since the days of Plotinus, was a deity imagined more abstract than the Unity toward which the Sufi aspires. Yet never was religious language more florid and more sensuous. According to the system alluded to, wine is equivalent to devotion; the tavern is an oratory; kisses and embraces, the raptures of piety; while wantonness, drunkenness, and merriment, are religious ardour and abstraction from all terrestrial thoughts.

The following passage from Mahmud's *Gulschen Ras* may suffice as a specimen of these devout Bacchanalia. It has the advantage of exhibiting the key in the lock :—

Know'st thou who the Host may be who pours the spirit's wine
Know'st thou what his liquor is whose taste is so divine?

¹⁵ Works, vol. iv., *On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindoos.*

The Host is thy Beloved One—the wine annihilation,
And in the fiery draught thy soul drinks in illumination.
Up, soul! and drink with burning lip the wine of ecstasy,
The drop should haste to lose itself in His unbounded sea.
At such a draught mere intellect swims wildered and grows wild;
Love puts the slave-ring in his ear and makes the rebel mild.
Our Friend holds out the royal wine and bids us drink it up;
The whole world is a drinking-house and everything a cup.
Drunken even Wisdom lies—ail in revel sunken;
Drunken are the earth and heaven; all the angels drunken.
Giddy is the very sky, round so often hasting,
Up and down it staggers wide, with but a single tasting.
Such the wine of might they drink in blest carouse above.
So the angels higher lift their flaming height of love.
Now and then the dregs they fling earthward in their quaffing,
And where'er a drop alights, lo, an Eden laughing!¹

¹⁶ *Blüthen.*, p. 218.

BOOK THE EIGHTH



THEOSOPHY IN THE AGE OF THE
REFORMATION

CHAPTER I.

Amongst them all sate he that wonned there,
That hight *Phantastes* by his nature trew ;
A man of years yet fresh, as mote appere,
Of swarth complexion and of crabbed hew,
That him full of melánocholy did shew ;
Bent hollow beetle brows, sharpe staring eyes
That mad or foolish seemed : one by his view
Mote deeme him born with ill-disposed skyes,
When oblique Saturne sate in th' house of agonyes.

SPENSER.

THE autumn is already advanced, and our friends who met at Summerford have returned to the neighbourhood of London. The days of damp and fog have arrived. All nature looks sullen and lustreless. As Gower gazes through the streaming pane on the narrowed dripping landscape, he sometimes tries, as sunny Persia and the Sufis recur to him, to transform the slope before his windows into an eastern valley. Fancy shall sow it thick with poppies, and daisies, and hyacinths of brilliant red ;—a thymy smell breathes up the pass ;—and there the ungainly stork, and gaily painted quails flutter away at the sound of his horse's hoofs. Or those house-tops at the foot of the hill, among their trees, shall be a Persian town, on which he looks from an eminence. There are the flat-roofed white houses, enclosing in their courts those twinkling silver lights, the fountains ; the green of trees among the shining walls relieves the eye ; the domes and minarets look down into the narrow streets ; there sleeps the burial-ground, under the shadow of its sentinel cypresses ; and there blows the garland of gardens, surrounding the whole with its wavy line of many colours. But the weather is a water-monster, and swallows up too-venturous Fancy. For a few

moments imagination can lay light behind the clouds ; bright hues flush out on the surface of familiar forms, and the magic power prevails to change them into creatures of the Orient. But the rainy reality is too potent, and the wilderness of vapour will receive no form, retain no colour. So Gower turns away from the windows—pokes the fire—feels idle and fit for nothing—struggles with himself—conquers, and finally achieves a morning's work.

Willoughby has laid aside his romance for a time and taken to the theosophists—to Jacob Behmen more especially. In fact, he had come to an exciting point in his story. He thought he had found a kind of seething turbulence in his thoughts, like that which certain rivers are said to manifest, when in parts of their course they pass over beds of subterranean fire. Afraid of becoming morbid and unnatural, he stopped work at once, and had recourse to Behmen as a refrigerant and sedative. The remedy succeeded to admiration. Within a day or two the patient could pronounce himself out of poetical danger ; and Atherton found him, when he dropped in one morning, enjoying, with Behmen in his hand, that most promising token of convalescence—a profound sleep.

Gower resolved to make himself amends for that uncongenial morning, by spending the evening at Ashfield. Thither also Willoughby had found his way. A considerable part of the evening was passed in Atherton's library, and conversation turned, before very long, upon the mystics, once more, and their position as regards the Reformation.

WILLOUGHBY. Those Teutonic worthies of the fourteenth century are noble specimens of the mystic.

GOWER. Truly, with them, Mysticism puts on her beautiful garments. See her standing, gazing heavenward ; 'her rapt

soul sitting in her eyes,' and about her what a troop of shining ones ! There is Charity, her cheek wet with tears for the dead Christ and pale with love for the living ; carrying, too, the oil and the wine—for Mysticism was the good Samaritan of the time, and succoured bleeding Poverty, when priest passed by and Levite ;—there is Truth, withdrawing worship from the form and superstitious substitute, transferring it from priest and pageantry to the heart alone with God, and pressing on, past every channel, toward the Fount Himself ;—there Humility, pointing to the embers of consumed good works, while she declares that man is nothing and that God is all ;—and there, too, Patriotism, and awakening Liberty—for Mysticism appealed to the people in their native tongue ; fashioned the speech and nerved the arms of the German nation ; gave heart to the Fatherland (bewildered in a tempest of fiery curses) to withstand, in the name of Christ, the vicar of Christ ; led on the Teutonic lion of her popular fable to foil the plots of Italian Reynard ; and dared herself to set at nought the infuriate Infallibility.

ATHERTON. Go on, Gower.

GOWER. It seems to me that the doctrine of justification by faith, is practically involved in a theology like that of Tauler, so deep in its apprehension of sin as selfishness, so thorough in renouncing all merit on the part of man.

ATHERTON. Yes, practically. What was needful in addition was, that this doctrine should take its due central place in the system of Christian truth, as the principle, if I may so speak, of salvation for all men. It was not enough to arrive at it as the upshot of individual mystical experience.

WILLOUGHBY. There I think you indicate the weak point of this mysticism—it is *so* individual—so much a matter of the personal inward life.

GOWER. That surely is the very secret of its strength.

WILLOUGHBY. Yes, of its strength up to a certain limit ; beyond that limit, of its weakness. It lacked facility of impartation. Its sympathies were broad and humane ; its doctrine too narrow and ascetic. Speaking from the depths of a soul that had known the nether darkness and the insufferable glory, its utterance was broken and obscure. It must be lived through to be understood. It might attract, but could only partially retain, the many. Its message, after all, was to the few.

GOWER. But those few, master-minds, remember.

ATHERTON. True, yet what powers could compensate for the want of clear speech—of a ready vehicle for transference of thought? A deep saying that of Jeremy Taylor's, where he remarks concerning mystical elevations and abstractions, that, while in other sciences the terms must first be known and then the rules and conclusions, the whole experience of mysticism must first be obtained before we can so much as know what it is, and the end acquired first—the conclusion before the premises.

WILLOUGHBY. When Luther appears, appealing to the Bible in the hands of the people, the defect is supplied, and we have the Reformation. That visible and venerable externalism, the Romish Church, could not be successfully assailed on merely internal grounds. The testimony of the individual heart against it was variable and uncertain, because more or less isolated. But where the Scriptures are set free, and they can be made the basis of assault, an externalism quite as visible, and more venerable, brings the outward to bear against the outward ; while the power of an inward life, pure and deep and ardent as the best of the mystics ever knew, animates the irresistible onset.

GOWER. The testimony of History, then, is decidedly against our modern spiritualism, which complains that we make too

much of the book, and sacrifice the subjective religious development to an outward authority. Luther—a true man of the spirit—conquered because he could point to a letter. The fire of his own inward life could kindle so grand a flame, because he was sustained by an authority which no individual mystic could arrogate. The Scriptures were the common ground for the Reformer who had the truth, and the inquirer who sought it. The excessive subjectivity of the mystic deprived him of that advantage.

WILLOUGHBY. But are we not overlooking other causes which enabled Luther to accomplish so much, and precluded the mystics from carrying further their reforming tendency?

ATHERTON. By all means let the influence of the interval between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries be duly taken into account. To do so will only make good Gower's remark. During the fifteenth century you find no fresh development of mysticism. The genuine religion of the period was still mystical in its complexion, but characterised by a much larger infusion of the scriptural element. This was the real advance of that interim. At the Universities the Bible began to displace the schoolmen. A better system of interpretation prevailed. Even with the mystics St. Paul was already taking the place of Dionysius, and mysticism began to lose its nature, merging in a true spirituality, sober-minded while fervent. In the theology of such men as John Wessel and Staupitz (who with Tauler and the German theology nourished the early religious life of Luther), we see a clearer apprehension of the nature of Christ's work for us—a better balancing of the outward and the inward. In fact, the great step necessary to produce a reformation, after the mystics had made their preparation, was this very bringing into prominence of the word of God. Then, to the ardour and the power of mysticism in its noblest form, was added the authority, the guidance, and the divine

adaptation of that message of salvation announced to all mankind.

WILLOUGHBY. Then, again, the doctrine of Luther directed men at once to the attainment of that clear hope concerning their spiritual safety which, say what we will, is the craving of our nature. We have seen how an Eckart would become pantheist to extort from philosophy that assurance which was denied him by the Church.

GOWER. Yet does not the strength and attraction of Romanism lie in this very characteristic—its tempting facility of comfort? Most men prefer a sleeping conscience to a tender one; and for such the Romish Church offers a perpetual siesta.

WILLOUGHBY. Granted; for this very reason, however, she cannot satisfy the deeper wants of the class I speak of—those men out of whom may be made mystics, reformers, heretics,—but religious Helots never. I am not speaking of mere comfort, but of true peace,—of that entrance into a new relationship towards God which gives us the heart to aspire towards a new nature.

GOWER. Agreed, then. Bunyan follows Paul when he makes Christian lose his burden early in the pilgrimage, so that he treads the onward path thenceforward with a lighter step.

ATHERTON. And can front Apollyon better. Look round at the Christendom of that age. You see only two classes who escape the condition of the hired servant—who are the sons of God and not his bondsmen. These are the mystics and the reformers. The mystic realizes adoption through appalling griefs and toils; the reformer is led thither straightway, as he exclaims with St. Paul, ‘Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God.’

WILLOUGHBY. How strongly does Luther urge men to believe on Christ as a Saviour for *them*—to receive in lowly sim-

plicity the peace divinely offered. How triumphantly does he show that such a faith is victory—that all other is a mere historic belief *about* Christ, not a belief *in* an ever-present Deliverer, who lives within, and redeems us daily from ourselves. Thus did his followers helm them speedily with hope, and escape, in great measure, the fearful strain of those alternations between rapture and despair, for which mysticism did not even seek a remedy. The distinction between justification and sanctification is no mere theological refinement. Its practical recognition, at least, is essential to that solemn joyousness which is the strength and glory of the Christian life.

ATHERTON. That is, after all, the true escape from Self which delivers you from bondage to the shifting frames and feelings of the hour—the mere accidents of personal temperament, by making clear the external ground of hope. Mysticism had not light enough to find the way to its own ideal of rest. Luther, with his Bible, realized in soberness the longed-for repose of its intense passion.

WILLOUGHBY. We must confess too, I think, that the representatives of the better mysticism were not strong enough to cope with the fanatical or lawless leaders of the worse. How Tauler, Suso, Ruysbroek, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica*, lift up their voices against the ‘false lights’—against men who deified every impulse, who professed to have transcended all virtue, who renounced all moral obligation and outward authority, or who resigned themselves to a stupid apathy which they called poverty of spirit.

GOWER. Those who constituted this last class must have been men who found in the false doctrine only an excuse for remaining as they were :—hard, indeed, to raise them to anything better. I imagine them poor ignorant hinds, the undermost victims of feudalism. One thinks of Tennyson’s portraiture of the serf,—

The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless days,
The long mechanic paces to and fro,
The set gray life and apathetic end.

WILLOUGHBY. Be that as it may, this bastard mysticism, whether rapacious as King Stork, or passive as King Log, multiplies among men. Want and oppression seize on the sacred pretext of an inward light, and mysticism is fast growing fierce and revolutionary. Good men, speaking words of spiritual freedom, have unawares awakened licence. They themselves slew Self with vigil and with tears ; and, lo ! a Hydra-headed Self, rampant and ruthless, stalks abroad, and they have been unwittingly his creators.

ATHERTON. What could they do, as mystics, but mourn and rebuke ? The inward testimony would not render an unvarying verdict in every case. Their appeal must be, either to an amount of right moral discernment already in the individual, or to the social judgment of a certain religious circle. Beyond these limits their very consistency is their weakness. For the thorough-going mystic, who is resolved to be in all things a light and law unto himself, replies that his inward light is quite as divinely authoritative *for him* as is that of the moderate man, reproving his excesses, for himself. He will answer, ' Friend, walk thou by thy light, as I by mine. The external is nothing to the internal. 'What is the chaff to the wheat ?' saith the Lord. Thou art external to me, I listen therefore to the voice within me, not to thine.'

WILLOUGHBY. We have, too, the express testimony of Melancthon to the fact, that had not Luther appeared when he did, to divert the under-current of popular indignation into the middle course of the Reformation, a fearful outbreak must have desolated Europe from the fury kindled by the intolerable oppressions of Church and State.

GOWER. Certainly mysticism could never have spoken with power enough to turn aside such a long-gathered tempest.

WILLOUGHBY. Where the revolutionary spirit had once broken out, only the strong hand could avail.

ATHERTON. And how ruthlessly was that remedy applied ! But—what in the world—Gower, I say, open your eyes. Are you going to sleep ?

GOWER. I was trying to recall a dream I had after reading about the Anabaptists of Munster.

WILLOUGHBY. A dream ! Let us have it.

GOWER. Wait a moment—ah, now I remember. First of all, I saw numbers of people toiling across the fields or along miry roads ; weary mothers, delicately nurtured, carrying their babes, and followed by their crying little ones ; the fathers laden, it would seem, with such property as they were allowed to take away. They look back mournfully towards the walls of a city, out of whose gates more of their friends are being thrust. These are the magistrates, the rich, the unbelievers, driven forth by the populace to find what shelter they may among the boors, or in the nearest towns. Then I am suddenly inside the city. I see, in one place, a crowd gathered about a shaggy, wild-eyed preacher, spluttering, screaming, foaming at the mouth ; in another is a circle surrounding two men in rags, whirling round like spinning dervishes. One man, with face ghastly pale, and bandaged head, who seems to have escaped from a hospital, moans and wrings his hands, predicting universal ruin. Now, with a yell, he has fallen down in convulsions. There a burly brute has pushed down a weeping woman from the door-steps of a great house, that he may stand on the spot to roar out his prophecy and exhortation. All this was somehow mingled with hosannas to Mathieson, the baker ; and at the end of the high street they were dancing about a bonfire made of all the books in the town, save the Bible only. Then the crowd made way for the favourite wife of John Bokelson, the tailor, riding in a great coach, resplendent in

silks and costly stuffs torn from the churches. Methought I entered the Town Hall. There, on a throne, in a suit of silver tissue, slashed and lined with crimson, fastened with buckles of gold, sat John Bokelson himself.¹

WILLOUGHBY. A Mormon elder, 'all of the olden time!'

ATHERTON. Be quiet. He had only eight wives.

GOWER. There he sat, with his triple crown, his globe, and cross of gold, his silver and golden swords, and above his head I could read, '*King of Righteousness over the whole World.*' Then came a long succession of petitioners, thrice kneeling and prostrating themselves before him. A bell rang. The audience was over. Now he was sending out ambassadors, calling on the neighbouring towns to rise and establish the Kingdom of the Holy Ghost,—'for the meek are to inherit the earth, and the time for spoiling the Egyptians is come.' After this I saw long tables spread in the market-place, with fine linen cloths, whereat four thousand people partook of the sacrament, and afterwards riotously feasted; the grey towers of the cathedral looking down upon them. I passed in at the church doors. All was confusion there, drunken shouts, and running to and fro of boys from cook-shops. The great oriel window had been broken by stones, and on the pavement, with its time-worn epitaphs, lay the many-coloured fragments of glass, among broken flagons and pools of beer. A mad musician had seized upon the organ, and above the uproar rolled the mighty volumes of sound, shaking the old dusty banners. Now came a crash of unearthly music—quite unheeded,—and then the melody melted and trembled away, dying down with a far-off wail of unutterable pathos. In the midst of his ecstasy the crazed performer was hurled away by a swarm of 'prentice lads who had found their way up the staircase. One among them

¹ A reference to Raumer's *History of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* will satisfy the reader that this

dream 'was not all a dream.' Most minute details are given in a letter from the MSS. of Dupuy.

truck up the well-known air of a wanton song. There was an outcry and sound of struggling, and I saw the madman leap from the clerestory down into the middle of the nave,—

WILLOUGHBY. And you woke?

GOWER. No. There came over me a kind of blank bewilderment, and all was changed. The sides of the church had become mountains. I was in a winding rocky glen, and the moon was rising over the black fantastic peaks that shut in the valley. I saw what made me think of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. Along the hollow of the gorge, and in the great furrows of the heights on each side, where should have been mountain streams and pebbles, were the glistening bones; and on the rock-ledges where the moonlight fell I could see them strewn; and on every boulder, skeleton-heaps; and at the mouth of every cavern, like icicles hanging from the stony jaws. I heard a rising wind sweep up the pass,—another blast, and another; and then, coming nearer and nearer, a sound as though withered boughs of innumerable trees were snapping in a tempest. All was whirling, darting motion among the white rattling fragments, above, beneath, around; till every clanking bone had been locked to its fellow, and a skeleton sat on every crag and lay in every hollow. The sinews and the flesh then came up upon them; after that, the breath; and they arose, an exceeding great army. I heard a muttering near me, and turning, I saw one gazing on the multitude, having in his hand a torch. His wild, eager look startled me. Now I thought he was Carlstadt, and then he changed into Thomas Münzer. Then again I was sure I recognized Spenser's Phantastes. He flung his torch into a cleft, whence it breathed out its last sparks into the windy night, and bowing his head, turned slowly away. I heard him say, 'Dead Church! Dead Church! How shalt thou live? I have learnt it. Flesh and blood first—then breath. Truth for a body, then Love for a soul

The spirit must have a form—must quicken a letter. First a fact for motive ; then let the young life work. The soul must have its sinews ; the spirit its instrument, its means, its words. Lie there, fire that destroyest ; come hither, fire that warmest,—that warmest to good, and that warnest from evil.’ Then I saw that he had a new book in his hand,—the last part then published of Luther’s German New Testament. He vanished. The hills rolled away in smoke, and I awoke with a start.

ATHERTON. I wish Phantastes and his kindred had really learnt the lesson of your dream. But such hot-brained enthusiasts cannot be taught, not even by sore stripes of adversity in the school of fools.

CHAPTER II.

He that misbelieves and lays aside clear and cautious reason in things that fall under the discussion of Reason, upon the pretence of hankering after some higher principle, (which, a thousand to one, proves but the infatuation of Melancholy and a superstitious hallucination), is as ridiculous as if he would not use his natural eyes about their proper object till the presence of some supernatural light, or till he had got a pair of Spectacles made of the Crystalline Heaven, or of the Cœlum Empyreum, to hang upon his nose for him to look through.—HENRY MORE.

ATHERTON. I ought to acknowledge, I suppose, that I have by me a rough draught, made some time since, representing the first strife between Mysticism and Reformation. But, as to reading it, I scarcely think——

WILLOUGHBY. You will not do so, I beg.

ATHERTON. Willoughby, you shall suffer for that. I'll begin.

WILLOUGHBY. Pelt away. I thought I should get a cocoanut for my stone. (*Atherton reads.*)

Luther and the Mystics.

The estimate to be formed of the mystics who lived before the Reformation differs very widely from that which is due to those who appeared after it. Previous to the Reformation, there was a far larger amount of truth with the mystics than with any other party in the Romish Church. They were, in reality, men of progress, and belonged to the onward element in their day and generation. For reform of some sort many of them laboured—all of them sighed. They protested against the corruptions of religion. Many an Augean stable would they have cleansed, could they but have found their Hercules.

In France, Bricconnet, Gerard, and Roussel were men of this class—not so outspoken as Luther and his followers, but led by mysticism to sympathy with reforming views, and enabled by that very mysticism to retain their connexion with Rome, regarding externals as indifferent.

When Luther comes with his doctrine of justification by faith, and his announcement that the Scriptures are the sufficient standard of Christian truth, a great change takes place. Mystics of the more thoughtful, rightly earnest sort, are among the first to embrace the new doctrines. Here they have the guide they longed for—here they find what mysticism could never give. They are, some of them, like Justin Martyr, who waited long among the schools of the Platonists for their promised immediate intuition of Deity, and then discovered among Christians that God was to be known in another way far better—through the medium of his written Word, by the teaching of his Spirit. But those who when a fuller light came, refused to quit for its lustre that isolated and flickering torch, about which men had gathered for lack of anything brighter, such were given over to the veriest absurdity, or speedily consigned to utter forgetfulness. By the mystic of the fourteenth century, the way of the Reformation was in great part prepared. By the mystic of the sixteenth century it was hindered and imperilled. In that huge ship of the state ecclesiastic, which all true hearts and hands in those troublous times were concerned to work to their very best, a new code of regulations had been issued. Such rule came in with Luther. Now some of those who would have been among the very best sailors under the old management, proved useless, or worse than useless under the new. One set of them were insolent and mutinous—had a way of reviling the captain in strange gibberish—and a most insane tendency to look into the powder-room with a light. Another class lay about useless, till having

been tumbled over many times by their more active comrades, they got kicked into corners, whence they were never more to emerge. So fared it with mysticism, attempting to persist in existence when its work for that time was done. The mystic so situated was either a caricature of reform or a cipher, either a fanatical firebrand or an unheeded negation.

We need not go far for examples. Dr. Bodenstein of Carlstadt (best known as simple Carlstadt) is professor at Wittenberg, and a thorough reformer. He is a little, swarthy, sunburnt man, crotchety to the last degree. He follows his intuitions—now this whim, now that—right to-day, wrong to-morrow—a man whom you never know where to find. He must spring to his conclusion at once; he will not first pause for satisfying reasons,—for clear ideas on the various bearings of his thought or deed. So his life is a series of starts; his actions incongruous and spasmodic, unlinked, unharmonized by any thoughtful plan or principle.

But Carlstadt is a man of books as well as of action. He writes treatises, repeating the doctrines of Tauler and the German Theology, all about abandonment, and not seeing God or enjoying Him more in this than in that event or employment; about the sin of enjoying ordinances and media, rather than God immediately; about the blessed self-loss in the One; about the reduction of ourselves to nothing. Ah, Dr. Bodenstein, thou mayest write for ever that way, and no one now will read! Men have left all this behind. A ripe full vintage invites their thirst; thine acrid and ascetic grape is now deserted. Gladly do they, for the most part, exchange the refined and impracticable requirements of mysticism, its vagueness, its incessant prohibition, for the genial, simple truth of that German New Testament which Luther is giving them.

At the juncture of which we are about to speak, Luther lay

hidden in the Wartburg. In the small town of Zwickau, in the Erzgebirge, there arose a knot of enthusiasts for whom Luther did not go half far enough. There was Storch, a weaver, to whom Gabriel had made very wonderful communications one night; another weaver, named Thomas, and a student, Stübner, who had forsaken the toil of study for the easier method of supernatural illumination. To these should be added the more notorious Thomas Münzer, who has been erroneously regarded as the founder of the party. 'Why such a slavish reverence for what the Bible says?' cry these mystics. 'What is a mere book?' 'Have we not immediate voices, impulses, revelations from the Holy Spirit, dictating all we should do? Better this than your Bible reading and college work.' Then, next, they prophesy terrible woes and judgments to come on Christendom, mainly through the Turks; they themselves, perhaps, in fitting time, may draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, and win the land for the saints.

These worthies were put down by the magistrates of Zwickau. Shaking off the Zwickau dust against their enemies, several of them seek a 'larger sphere of usefulness' in Wittenberg. They found the city already in no small excitement concerning certain reforms which Carlstadt was making at full speed. He fraternizes with the Zwickau prophets at once. Indeed, he had been heard to say of the whole body of Scripture what divines were accustomed to say of the law only, that it was a killing letter, leading to nothing more than a sense of guilt and deserved condemnation. Faster and faster come his changes, so well-meant, but so ill-advised. With a few strokes he abolishes auricular confession, makes it incumbent to violate the fast days, and renders it customary to come to the sacrament without preparation. Next an iconoclast riot is raised. Carlstadt declares that the magistrates have power to render criminal those observances which the popular voice declares

contrary to the Word of God ; that if they refuse, the community may take the law into its own hands.

A scholar like Carlstadt, a professor of established repute, surrenders at last to the vulgar error of the very coarsest mysticism. He advises his students to go home ; human learning is vain ; Hebrew and Greek an idle toil ; inspiration is far above scholarship. Were there not prophets among them, wiser than all the doctors, who had never studied anything or anywhere for half an hour ? He himself went about among the poor people, asking them the meaning of Scripture passages, and believing that the hap-hazard notions they put forth were a special revelation from Him who hideth from the wise and prudent what is revealed unto babes. Imagine the Professor bawling a text into the ear of some deaf old crone who cowers beside the stove, and awaiting the irrelevant mumblings of ignorant decrepitude as the oracle of God ! Fancy him accosting the shoemaker at his stall, and getting his notion of the text in question, noting it down as infallible, and going his way rejoicing ; while Crispin, who knows him, thinks over and over again what a far cleverer answer he might have given, and wishes unsaid what Carlstadt believes inspired !

Is there no one in Wittenberg to unmask these follies, and to quiet the smouldering excitement dangerously spreading among townspeople and students ? Melanchthon is young. The loud browbeating volubility of the prophets overpowers his gentle nature. He is undecided—he fancies he sees some force in what they say about baptism. He is timid—he will do nothing.

Friends write to Luther. Back comes an answer from a man who sees to the heart of the matter in a moment—a standing confutation of the mystic's ambition, in three sentences. Thus replies Luther—‘Do you wish to know the place, the time, the manner in which God holds converse with

men? Hear then—‘As a lion so hath he crushed all my bones;’ and again, ‘I am cast out from before thy face;’ and again, ‘My soul is filled with plagues, and my life draweth nigh unto the gates of hell.’ The Divine Majesty does not speak to men immediately, as they call it, so that they have vision of God, for He saith, ‘No flesh shall see me and live.’ Human nature could not survive the least syllable of the Divine utterance. So God addresses man through men, because we could not endure His speaking to us without medium.’

And the mystics could not say (as mystics so commonly plead) that Luther was a man unable, from defective experience, to understand them. If any man had sounded the depths of the soul’s ‘dim and perilous way,’ it was he. Nay, it is for him to question *their* experience. ‘Inquire,’ he says, to Melanchthon, ‘if they know aught of those spiritual distresses, those divine births, and deaths, and sorrows, as of hell.’¹

Luther receives day by day more alarming intelligence. He fears the spread of false doctrine—insurrection in the name of reform. He is anxious lest the elector should persecute the new lights—a step which the fat, amiable, children-with-sugar-plums-feeding Frederick, was not very likely to take. He forms the heroic resolve of quitting his refuge, and suddenly reappears in Wittenberg. He preaches sermons marvellous for moderation and wisdom—sermons which accomplish what is so hard, the calming of heated passion, the reconciliation of adversaries. At his voice Violence and Tumult slink away—their hounds still in the leash; and Charity descends, waving her wand of peace, and shedding the light of her heavenly smile on every face. So triumphs Religion over Fanaticism.

Finally, Luther was called on to hold a discussion with two

¹ See Note, p. 51.

of the prophets, Stübner, and one Cellarius, a schoolmaster. The latter, when called upon by Luther to substantiate his positions from the Scripture, stamps, strikes the table with his fist, and declares it an insult to speak so to a man of God. Luther, at last, seeing this man foaming, roaring, leaping about like one possessed, comes to believe that there *is* a spirit in these men—but an unclean one from beneath. He cries out finally, after his homely fashion, ‘I smack that spirit of yours upon the snout.’ Howls of indignation from the Zwickauer side—universal confusion—dissolution of assembly. The prophets after this find themselves moved to quit Wittenberg without delay—their occupation gone. Let prosaic or sceptical folk regard this discussion as they may, to those who look beneath the surface, it is manifest that there really was a conflict of spirits going on then and there—the unclean spirit of Arrogance and Misrule quailing before that of Truth and Soberness.²

Carlstadt and his allies of Zwickau exhibit mysticism rampant, making reformation look questionable. A very fair representative of the other class of mystic is found in Sebastian Frank. This man, born at the close of the fifteenth century, seems to have lived a wandering life in different parts of Germany (often brought into trouble by his doctrines, probably) for some forty or fifty years. He was early enamoured of the German Theology, the writings of Tauler, above all, of Eckart’s speculations. The leading principles contained in the books he regarded with such veneration, he elaborated into a system of his own. Starting with the doctrine of the *Theologia Germanica*, that God is the *substans* of all things, he pushes it to the verge of a dreamy pantheism—nay, even beyond that uncertain frontier. He conceives of a kind of divine life-process (*Lebens-prozess*) through which the

² See the account in Ranke’s *History of the Reformation*.

universe has to pass. This process, like the Hegelian, is threefold. *First*, the divine substance, the abstract unity which produces all existence. *Second*, said substance appearing as an opposite to itself—making itself object. *Third*, the absorption of this opposition and antithesis—the consummate realization whereof takes place in the consciousness of man when restored to the supreme unity and rendered in a sense divine. The fall of man is, in his system, a fall from the Divinity within him—that Reason which is the Holy Ghost, in which the Divine Being is supposed first to acquire will and self-consciousness. Christ is, with him, the divine element in man. The work of the historic Saviour is to make us conscious of the ideal and inward, and we thus arrive at the consciousness of that fundamental divineness in us which knows and is one with the Supreme by identity of nature.³ Such doctrine is a relapse upon Eckart, and also an anticipation of modern German speculation.

Yet, shall we say on this account that Sebastian Frank was before his age or behind it? The latter unquestionably. He stood up in defence of obsolescent error against a truth that was blessing mankind. He must stand condemned, on the sole ground of judgment we modern judges care to take, as one of the obstructives of his day who put forth what strength he had to roll back the climbing wheel of truth. We pardon Tauler's allegorical interpretations—those freaks of fancy, so subtle, so inexhaustible, so curiously irrelevant in one sense, yet so sagaciously brought home in another—we assent to Melancthon's verdict, who calls him the German Origen; but we remember that every one in his times interpreted the Bible in that arbitrary style. The Reformers, aided by the revival of letters, were successful in introducing those principles of in-

³ See Carriere, *Die philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationzeit* 1847), pp. 196-203.

terpretation with which we are ourselves familiar. But for this more correct method of exegesis, the benign influence of the Scriptures themselves had been all but nullified; for any one might have found in them what he would. Yet against this good thing, second only to the Word itself, Sebastian Frank stands up to fight in defence of arbitrary fancy and of lifeless pantheistic theory with such strength as he may. So has mysticism, once so eager to press on, grown childishly conservative, and is cast out straightway. Luther said he had written nothing against Frank, he despised him so thoroughly. 'Unless my scent deceive me,' says the reformer, 'the man is an enthusiast or spiritualist (*Geisterer*), for whom nothing will do but spirit! spirit!—and not a word of Scripture, sacrament, or ministry.'

So Frank, contending for the painted dreams of night against the realities of day—for fantasy against soberness—and falling, necessarily, in the fight, has been curtailed over in his sleep by the profoundest darkness. Scarcely does any one care to rescue from their oblivion even the names of his many books. What is his *Golden Ark*, or *Seven Sealed Book*, or collection of most extravagant interpretations, called *Paradoxa*, to any human creature?

For a Chronicle he left behind, the historian has sometimes to thank him. He had a near-sighted mind. Action immediately about him he could limn truly. But he had not the comprehensiveness to see whither the age was tending.

WILLOUGHBY. How admirable is that reply of Luther's;—an unanswerable rebuke of that presumptuous mysticism which would boastfully tear aside the veil and dare a converse face to face with God. Semele perishes. That the fanatic survives is proof that he has but embraced a cloud.

ATHERTON. A rebuke, rather, of that folly, in all its forms,
VOL. II. E

which imagines itself the subject of a special revelation that is no fearful searching of the soul, but merely a flattering reflection of its own wishes.

GOWER. And what can most men make of that milder form of the same ambition—I mean the exhortation to escape all image and figure? How else can we grasp spiritual realities? The figurative language in which religious truth is conveyed to us seems to me to resemble that delicate membrane gummed to the back of the charred papyrus-roll, which otherwise would crumble to pieces in unwinding. The fragile film alone would drop to dust, but by this means it coheres, and may be unfolded for inspection.

WILLOUGHBY. And when a scripture figure is pressed too far (the besetting sin of systematising divines), it is as though your gold-beater's skin, or whatever it be, had been previously written on, and the characters mistaken for those of the roll to which it was merely the support and lining.

GOWER. I can readily conceive how provoking a man like Sebastian Frank must have been to Luther, with his doctrines of passivity and apathy, his holy contempt for rule, for rationality, or practicability, and his idle chaotic system-spinning, when every hand was wanted for the goodly cause of Reform.

ATHERTON. Then there was Schwenkfeld, too, who went off from Luther as pietist in one direction, while Frank departed as pantheist in the other.

GOWER. A well-meaning man, though; a kind of sixteenth-century Quaker, was he not?

ATHERTON. Yes. Compound a Quaker, a Plymouth Brother, and an Antipædo Baptist, and the result is something like a Schwenkfeldian.

WILLOUGHBY. For my enquiries concerning Jacob Behmen, I find that the most important of the Lutheran mystics was a

quiet man of few words, pastor at Tschopau during the latter half of the sixteenth century, by name Valentine Weigel.

GOWER. You will give us more information about him when you read your essay on Jacob Behmen. For the present I confess myself tired of these minor mystics.

WILLOUGHBY. I shall have to do with him only in as far as he was a forerunner of Jacob. Weigel's treatises were published posthumously, and a very pretty quarrel there was over his grave. He bases his theology on the *Theologia Germanica*, adds a modification of Sebastian Frank, and introduces the theosophy of Paracelsus. In this way he brings us near to Behmen, who united in himself the two species of mysticism—the theopathic, represented by Schwenkfeld, on the one side, and the theosophic, by Paracelsus, on the other.

ATHERTON. As Lutheranism grew more cold and rigid, mysticism found more ground of justification, and its genial reaction rendered service to the Church once more.

WILLOUGHBY. I think the sword of the Thirty Years' War may be said to have cleared legitimate space for it. In that necessary strife for opinion the inward life was sorely perilled. It was inevitable, I suppose, that multitudes should at least have sought, not only spirituality in mysticism and purity in separation, but wisdom in the stars, wealth in alchemy, and the communion of saints in secret societies.

NOTE TO PAGE 46.

¹ Luther writes :—*Jam vero privatum spiritum explores etiam, quæras, num experti sint spirituales illas angustias et nativitates divinas, mortes, infernosque. Si audieris blanda, tranquilla, devota (ut vocant) et religiosa, etiamsi in tertium cœlum sese raptos dicant, non approbabis. Tenta ergo et ne Iesum quidem audias gloriosum, nisi videris prius crucifixum.* A golden rule.—*Luth. Epist.* De Wette, No. 358. Jan. 13, 1522. The language he uses elsewhere concerning such fanatics is strong, but not stronger than the occasion demanded. It was indeed no time for compliment—for hesitant, yea-nay utterance upon the question. The freedom claimed by Carlstadt's followers led straightway to a lawless pride, which was so

much servitude to Satan—was the death-wound, not the crown, of spiritual life. It was from the fulness of his charity—not in lack of it—that Luther uttered his manly protest against that perilous lie. Michelet selects a passage which shows in a very instructive manner how the strong mind (in this quarrel, as in so many more) breaks in pieces, with a touch, the idols which seduce the weak. ‘If you ask Carlstadt’s people,’ says Luther, ‘how this sublime spirit is arrived at, they refer you, not to the Gospel, but to their reveries, to their vacuum. ‘Place thyself,’ say they, ‘in a state of void tedium as we do, and then thou wilt learn the same lesson; the celestial voice will be heard, and God will speak to thee in person.’ If you urge the matter further, and ask what this void tedium of theirs is, they know as much about it as Dr. Carlstadt does about Greek and Hebrew. . . . Do you not in all this recognize the Devil, the enemy of divine order? Do you not see him opening a huge mouth, and crying, ‘Spirit, spirit, spirit!’ and all the while he is crying this, destroying all the bridges, roads, ladders,—in a word, every possible way by which the spirit may penetrate into you; that is to say, the external order established by God in the holy baptism, in the signs and symbols, and in his own Word. They would have you learn to mount the clouds, to ride the wind; but they tell you neither how, nor when, nor where, nor what; all these things you must learn of yourself, as they do.’

CHAPTER III.

Subtle. Your *lapis philosophicus* ?

Face. 'Tis a stone,
And not a stone ; a spirit, a soul, and a body ;
Which if you do dissolve, it is dissolved ;
If you coagulate, it is coagulated ;
If you make it to fly, it flieth.

THE ALCHEMIST.

ATHERTON. We are to call on Willoughby to-night, I believe, to conduct us to Jacob Behmen—or Boehme, more correctly.

WILLOUGHBY. I shall scarcely bring you so far this evening. I have to trouble you with some preliminary paragraphs on the theosophic mysticism which arose with the Reformation, some remarks on the theurgic superstitions of that period, and a word or two about Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus. A very formidable preamble,—yet necessary, I assure you.

And herewith, Willoughby, after solacing himself with a goodly bunch of grapes, began to read his essay.

ON THE THEOSOPHY OF JACOB BEHMEN.

§ I. *Mysticism and Science.*

I have to trace the advance of mysticism into a new world. Prior to the Reformation the mystic sought escape in God from all that was not God. After that epoch he is found seeking at the hands of his Maker a supernatural acquaintance with all that He has made. Once his highest knowledge was that surpassing ignorance which swoons in the glory of the Infinite.

Now he claims a familiarity passing that of common mortals with the mysteries of sea and land, of stars and elements. Escaping that monastic dualism which abandoned the world to Satan, mysticism will now dispute the empire of the prince of this world. Inspired from above, and haply not unaided by angelic ministries, the master of the hidden wisdom will devoutly elicit the benign potencies of the universe, and repel the malevolent. No longer a mere contemplatist—gazing up at the heights of the divine nature, or down into the depth of the human—the mystic of the new age will sweep, with all-piercing vision, the whole horizon of things visible. The theosophist covets holiness still, but knowledge scarcely less. Virtue (as aforetime) may be regarded by such mystics too much as the means to an end. But the end is no longer the same. With the theopathic mysticism the exercise of the Christian graces and the discipline of fiery spiritual purgations were the road to a superhuman elevation—a vision and repose anticipating heaven. With the theosophic, Faith and Charity and Hope were the conditions of the higher knowledge. For never to the proud, the greedy, the impure, would heaven vouchsafe the keys of mystery and hazardous prerogative in the unseen world. To the contemplative mystic the three heavenly sisters brought a cloud of glory; for the theosophist they unclasped nature's 'infinite book of secrecy;' in the hand of the theurgist they placed an enchanter's wand.

The sphere of mysticism was not thus extended by any expansive force of its own. The spirit of a new and healthier age had ventured to depreciate the morbid seclusion of the cloister. Men began to feel that it was at once more manly and more divine to enquire and to know than to gaze and dream. After the servitude of the schools and the collapse of the cloister, the ambition of the intellect would acknowledge no limit, would accept of no repose. The highest aspirations of religion and the

most daring enterprise of science were alike mystical. They coalesced in theosophy. Changes such as these were wrought by a power from without. Mysticism was awakened from its feverish dream by the spirit of the time—as Milton's Eve by Adam from her troubled morning sleep—and invited to go forth and see 'nature paint her colours.'

As the revival of letters spread over Europe the taste for antiquity, and natural science began to claim its share in the freedom won for theology, the pretensions of the Cabbala, of Hermes, of the Neo-Platonist theurgy, became identified with the cause of progress.

That ancient doctrine, familiar to the school of Plotinus, according to which the world was a huge animal—a living organism united in all its parts by secret sympathies,—received some fresh development in the fancy of every adept. The student of white magic believed, with Iamblichus, in the divine power inherent in certain words of invocation, whereby the aspirant might hold intercourse with powers of the upper realm. With the modern, as with the ancient Neo-Platonists, religion bore an indispensable part in all such attempts. Proclus required of the theurgist an ascetic purity. Campanella demands a *fides intrinseca*,—that devout simplicity of heart which should qualify the candidate at once to commune with holy spirits and to baffle the delusive arts of the malign.¹

But the theosophists of Germany were not, like the Alexandrians, slavish worshippers of the past. They did not resort to theurgy in order to prop a falling faith. They did not wield that instrument to prolong, by the spasmodic action of superstitious practice, the life of an expiring philosophy. Those formulæ of incantation, those 'symbola' and 'synthemata,' which were everything with Iamblichus, were with many of them only a bye-work, and by others utterly abjured. They believed de-

¹ Horst's *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. iii. p. 21.

voutly in the genuineness of the Cabbala. They were persuaded that beneath all the floods of change this oral tradition had perpetuated its life unharmed from the days of Moses downward, —even as Jewish fable taught them that the cedars alone, of all trees, had continued to spread the strength of their invulnerable arms below the waters of the deluge. They rejoiced in the hidden lore of that book as in a treasure rich with the germs of all philosophy. They maintained that from its marvellous leaves man might learn the angelic heraldry of the skies, the mysteries of the divine nature, the means of converse with the potentates of heaven.² But such reverence, so far from oppressing, seemed rather to enfranchise and excite their imagination. In the tradition before which they bowed, the majesty of age and the charm of youth had met together. Hierocles brought to them Pythagoras out of an immemorial past; and there was no novelty more welcome in that restless wonder-loving present. Thus the theosophists could oppose age to age, and reverently impugn the venerable. Antiquity, in the name of Aristotle, so long absolute, had imposed a shameful bondage. Antiquity, in the name of Plato, newly disinterred, imparted a glorious privilege. The chains of the past were being filed away by instruments which the past had furnished. Ancient prescription became itself the plea for change when one half of its demands was repudiated in honour of the other.

This theosophy was a strange mixture of the Hellenic, the Oriental, and the Christian styles of thought. I shall assume as its emblem the church of St. John, at Rhodes, which, full of statues of saints and tombs of knights, broken, or rounded into mounds of sullied snow by the hand of time, is surmounted by a crescent, and echoes to the voice of the muezzin, while sheltering beneath its porch the altar of a Grecian God. But our incongruous theosophic structure, ever open and ever changing,

² Agrippa's *Vanit o Arts and Sciences*, chap. 47.

enlarged its precincts continually. A succession of eccentric votaries enriched it ceaselessly with quaint devices, fresh flowers of fancy, new characters in mystical mosaic, and intricate arabesques of impenetrable significance.

Plotinus, indifferent to the material universe, had been content to inherit and transmit the doctrine of the world's vitality. That notion now became the nucleus of a complex system of sympathies and antipathies. It suggested remedies for every disease, whether of mind or body. It prompted a thousand fantastic appliances and symbols. But at the same time it rendered the enquirer more keenly observant of natural phenomena. Extolling Trismegistus to the skies, and flinging his Galen into the fire, Paracelsus declared the world his book.³ The leaves of that volume were continents and seas—provinces, its paragraphs—the plants, the stones, the living things of every clime, its illuminated letters.

In the dawn of science hovered a meteor, which at once lured onward and led astray the seekers after truth,—it was the hope of special illumination. They hastened to generalize on a medley of crude fancies and of partial facts. For generalization was with them a sudden impulse, not a slow result. It was an exalted act prompted by a Divine light that flashed on intuition from without, or radiated from the wondrous depths of the microcosm within. Hence (as with bees in dahlias) their industry was their intoxication. It is of the essence of mysticism to confound an internal creation or process with some external manifestation. Often did the theosophist rejoice in the thought that nature, like the rock in the desert, had been made to answer to his compelling rod,—that a divinely-given stream welled forth to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. As we look back upon his labours we can perceive that the impulse was by no means a wonder, and often anything but a blessing. It was

³ See M. B. Lessing, *Paracelsus sein Leben und Denken*, p. 60.

in reality but as the rush of the water into the half-sunk shaft of his research, flooding the region of his first incautious efforts, and sooner or later arresting his progress in every channel he might open. In fact, the field of scientific enquiry, which had withered under the schoolman, was inundated by the mystic,—so facile and so copious seemed the knowledge realized by heaven-born intuition. It was reserved for induction to develop by a skilful irrigation that wonder-teeming soil. No steady advance was possible when any hap-hazard notion might be virtually invested with the sanction of inspiration.

The admixture of light and darkness during that twilight period reached precisely the degree of shadow most favourable to the vigorous pursuit of natural science by supernatural means.

It is true that the belief in witchcraft everywhere prevalent did, ever and anon, throw people and rulers alike into paroxysms of fear and fury. But an accomplished student of occult art was no longer in much danger of being burnt alive as a fair forfeit to Satan. The astrologer, the alchemist, the adept in natural magic, were in universal demand. Emperors and nobles, like Rudolph and Wallenstein, kept each his star-gazer in a turret chamber, surrounded by astrolabes and alembics, by ghastly preparations and mysterious instruments, and listened, with ill-concealed anxiety, as the zodiac-zoned and silver-bearded counsellor, bent with study and bleared with smoke, announced, in oracular jargon, the junction of the planets or his progress toward projection. The real perils of such pretenders now arose from the very confidence they had inspired. Such was the thirst for gold and the faith in alchemy, that no man supposed to possess the secret was secure from imprisonment and torture to compel its surrender. Setonius was broken on the wheel because the cruel avarice of the great could not wring out of

him that golden process which had no existence. The few enquirers whose aim was of a nobler order were mortified to find their science so ill appreciated. They saw themselves valued only as casters of horoscopes and makers of cunning toys. Often, with a bitter irony, they assumed the airs of the charlatan for their daily bread. Impostors knavish as Sir Arthur Wardour's Dousterswivel, deceived and deceiving like Leicester's Alasco, swarmed at the petty court of every landgrave and elector.

Theurgic mysticism was practically admitted even within the Lutheran Church, while the more speculative or devotional mysticism of Sebastian Frank, Schwenkfeld, and Weigel, was everywhere proscribed. Lutheran doctors, believers in the Cabbala, which Reuchlin had vindicated against the monks, were persuaded that theurgic art could draw the angels down to mortals. Had not the heaven-sent power of the Cabbala wrought the marvels of Old Testament history? Had not the power of certain mystic words procured for Hebrew saints the privilege of converse with angelic natures? Had not the Almighty placed all terrestrial things under the viceregency of the starry influences? Had He not united all things, animate and inanimate, by a subtle network of sympathies, and was not man the leading chord in this system of harmony—the central heart of this circulating magnetic force? Thus much assumed, a devout man, wise in the laws of the three kinds of vincula between the upper and lower worlds, might be permitted to attract to himself on earth those bright intelligences who were to be his fellows in heaven. Theurgy rested, therefore, on the knowledge of the *intellectual vinculum* (the divine potency inherent in certain words), the *astral* (the favourable conjunction of the planets), and the *elementary* (the sympathy of creatures). In the use of these was, of course, involved the

usual hocus-pocus of magical performance—talismans, magic lights, incense, doves' blood, swallows' feathers, *et hoc genus omne*.⁴

⁴ The third and fourth volumes of Horst's *Zauberbibliothek* contain a very full account of all these vincula. The vincula of the Intellectual World are principally formulas of invocation; secret names of God, of celestial principalities and spirits; Hebrew, Arabic, and barbarous words; magical figures, signs, diagrams, and circles. Those of the Elementary World consist in the sympathetic influence of certain animals and plants, such as the mole, the white otter, the white dove, the mandrake; of stones and

metals, ointments and suffumigations. Those of the Astral or Celestial World depend on the aspects and dispositions of the heavenly bodies, which, under the sway of planetary spirits, infuse their influences into terrestrial objects. This is the astrological department of theurgy. Meinholt's *Sidonia* contains a truthful exhibition of this form of theurgic mysticism, as it obtained in Protestant Germany. See Paracelsus, *De Spiritibus Planetarum*, passim. (Ed. Dorn., 1584.)

CHAPTER IV.

For I am siker that there be sciences,
By which men maken divers apparences,
Swiche as thise subtil tregetoures play.
For oft at festes have I well herd say,
That tregetoures, within an halle large,
Have made come in a water and a barge,
And in the halle rowen up and down.
Sometime hath semed come a grim leoun,
And sometime floures spring as in a mede,
Sometime a vine and grapes white and rede,
Sometime a castel all of lime and ston,
And whan hem liketh voideth it anon.
Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.

CHAUCER.

Give me thy hand, terrestrial ; so :—Give me thy hand, celestial ; so.
MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—SECOND EVENING.

§ 2. *Cornelius Agrippa.*

CORNELIUS AGRIPPA, of Nettesheim, is a favourable specimen of that daring and versatile order of mind which, in the sixteenth century, sought adventure and renown in every province of philosophy. His restless life is picturesque with the contrast of every imaginable vicissitude. A courtier and a scholar, a soldier and a mystic, he made the round of the courts of Europe. Patronized and persecuted alternately, courted as a prodigy and hunted down as a heretic, we see him to-day a Plato, feasted by the Sicilian tyrant, to-morrow a Diogenes, crawling with a growl into his tub. He lectures with universal applause on the *Verbum Mirificum* of Reuchlin. He forms a secret association for the promotion of occult

science. He is besieged by swarming boors in some Garde Doloureuse, and escapes almost by miracle. He enters the service of Margaret, Regent of the Netherlands, then that of the Emperor, and is knighted on the field for heroic gallantry in the campaign against the Venetians. He is next to be heard of as a teacher of theology at Pavia. Plunged into poverty by the reverses of war, he writes for comfort a mystical treatise *On the Threefold Way of Knowing God*. The hand of the Marquis of Montferrat plucks him from his slough of despond, but ere long he is again homeless, hungering, often after bread, ever after praise and power. At the court of France, the Queen Mother shows him favour, but withholds the honour to which such gifts might well aspire. Then appears the famous book *On the Vanity of Arts and Sciences*.

It was wormwood to the proud spirit of Agrippa to be treated as a mere astrologer. To think that he must toil in obscurity like a gnome, calculating aspects, sextile and quartile, reckoning the cusps and hours of the houses of heaven, to subserve the ambition of an implacable intriguante, when his valour might adorn the tourney and his wisdom sway the council ! He would fain have been in France what that great astrologer of the previous century, Martius Galeotti, had been in Hungary, to whom the Czar of Russia and the Khan of Tartary were said to have sent respectful presents of more than royal magnificence ; who was ambassador alike of monarchs and the stars ; who bore a share in the statecraft of the court at Buda, and charging abreast with the crowned helm of Matthias, rode down the ranks of the turbaned infidel. So the gallant knight and the 'courtier of most elegant thread,' the archimage, the philosopher, the divine, became for awhile a sceptic and a Timon. 'The *De Vanitate Scientiarum* ravages, with a wild Berserker fury, the whole domain of knowledge. The monk Ilsan of mediæval fable did not more savagely trample the roses

in the enchanted garden of Worms,—Pantagruel did not more cruelly roast with fire his six hundred and nine and fifty vanquished horsemen, than did Agrippa consume with satire every profession and every calling among men. With reason might he say in his preface, ‘The grammarians will rail at me—the etymologists will derive my name from the gout—the obstreperous rhetoricians will plague me with their big words and inimical gestures—the intricate geometrician will imprison me in his triangles and tetragonals—the cosmographer will banish me among the bears to Greenland.’ Scholastic fanaticism could never pardon the man whose sarcasm had left nothing standing, save the Holy Scriptures. The monks and doctors of Lyons hurled back his tongue-bolts with the dreaded cry of heresy. His disgrace and exile they could compass, but they could not arrest those winged words or bow that dauntless spirit.

The treatise *On the Threefold Way of Knowing God*, shows how, by Divine illumination, the Christian may discern the hidden meanings of the New Testament, as the Cabbalist evolves those of the Old. It teaches the way in which the devout mind may be united to God, and, seeing all things in Him, and participating in His power, may even now, according to the measure of faith, foretell the future and controul the elements.

The *De Occulta Philosophia*¹ (a youthful work re-written in his later years) treats of the three kinds of magic—the *Natural* (the science of sympathies and antipathies, whereby the adept accelerates or modifies the process of nature so as to work apparent miracles); the *Celestial*, or Mathematical (astrology); and the *Religious*, or ceremonial (theurgy).

Once on a time, the savans were sorely puzzled by certain

¹ See Carriere (pp. 89-114), to whom I am indebted as regards the character of this and the preceding work, having had access to neither.

irregular holes on the front of an ancient temple. One, more sagacious than the rest, suggested that these indentations might be the marks of nails used to fasten to the stone metallic plates representing Greek characters. And, in fact, lines drawn from one point to the next were found to form letters, and the name of the deity stood disclosed. In like manner, the student of natural magic sought to decipher the secret language of the universe, by tracing out those lines of sympathy which linked in a mysterious kindred objects the most remote. It was believed that the fields of space were threaded in every direction by the hidden highways of magnetic influence; traversed from all points by an intricate network of communication uniting the distant and the near—the celestial and terrestrial worlds. Science was charged with the office of discovering and applying those laws of harmony and union which connect the substances of earth with each other and with the operation of the stars. Through all the stages of creation men thought they saw the inferior ever seeking and tending towards the higher nature, and the order above shedding influence on that below. The paternal sun laid a hand of blessing on the bowed head of the corn. The longing dews passed heavenward, up the Jacob's ladder of the sunbeams, and entering among the bright ministries of the clouds, came down in kindly showers. Each planet, according to its mind or mood, shed virtues healing or harmful into minerals and herbs. All sweet sounds, moving by the mystic laws of number, were an aspiration towards the music of the spheres—a reminiscence of the universal harmonies. The air was full of phantasms or images of material objects. These, said Agrippa, entering the mind, as the air the body, produce presentiments and dreams. All nature is oracular. A cloudy chill or sultry lull are the Delphi and Dodona of birds and kine and creeping things. But the sense of sinful man is dull. The master of the hidden wisdom may

facilitate the descent of benign influences, and aid the travailing creation, sighing for renewal. It is for him to marry (in the figurative language of the time) the 'lower and the higher potencies, the terrestrial and the astral, as doth the husbandman the vine unto the elm.' The sage can make himself felt in the upper realm, as on the earth, by touching some chord whose vibration extends into the skies. From the law of sympathy comes the power of amulets and philtres, images and ointments, to produce love or hate, health or sickness, to arrest the turning arms of the distant mill, or stay the wings of the pinnace on the Indian seas. Such was Agrippa's world.

According to Baptista Porta, a certain breath of life, or soul of the world, pervades the whole organism of the universe, determines its sympathies, and imparts, when received into the soul of the inquirer, the capacity for magical research. Similarly, in the theory of Agrippa, the fifth element, or æther, is the breath of this World-Soul. Within the spirit thus animating the body of the world lie those creative powers, or qualities, which are the producers of all things visible. The instruments of this universal plastic Power are the stars and the spirits of the elements.

With all the theosophists man is a microcosm—the harmonized epitome of the universe: a something representative of all that is contained in every sphere of being, is lodged in his nature. Thus he finds sympathies everywhere, and potentially knows and operates everywhere. Since, therefore, the inmost ground of his being is in God, and the rest of his nature is a miniature of the universe,—a true self-knowledge is, proportionately, at once a knowledge of God and of creation. The sources of Religion and of Science are alike within him.

Agrippa borrows from the Phædrus four kinds of inspiration,—the Poetic, the Dionysian (revealing visions), the Apollinian (imparting hidden wisdom), and that of which ascendant Venus.

is the pure patroness—Rapturous Love, which carries us to heaven in ecstasy, and in the mystic union with Deity discloses things unutterable. He compares the soul, as ordinarily in the body, to a light within a dark lantern. In moments of mystical exaltation, it is taken out of its prison-house, the divine element is emancipated, and rays forth immeasurably, transcending space and time. His Platonism, like that of so many, led him from the sensual and the formal to the ideal. Greek was, with reason, accounted dangerous. Plato was a reformer side by side with Luther among the Germans. How loathsome was clerkly vice beside the contemplative ideal of Plato.

In those days almost every great scholar was also a great traveller. The wanderings of Agrippa and his theosophic brethren contributed not a little to the progress and diffusion of occult science. These errant professors of magic, like those ærial travellers the insects, carried everywhere with them the pollen of their mystic Lily, the symbol of theosophy, and sowed the fructifying particles in minds of kindred growth wherever they came. Their very crosses and buffetings, if they marred their plans of study, widened their field of observation; were fertile in suggestions; compelled to new resources, and multiplied their points of view,—as a modern naturalist, interrupted during his observant morning's walk, and driven under a tree by a shower, may find unexpected compensation in the discovery of a new moss upon its bark, or a long-sought fly among its dropping-leaves.

GOWER. Agrippa's philosophy gives us a highly imaginative view of the world.

ATHERTON. A beautiful romance,—only surpassed by the actual results of modern discovery.

WILLOUGHBY. In those days every fancied likeness was construed into a law of relationship: every semblance became

speedily reality;—somewhat as the Chinese believe that sundry fantastic rocks in one of their districts, which are shaped like rude sculptures of strange beasts, do actually enclose animals of corresponding form. And as for the links of connexion supposed to constitute bonds of mysterious sympathy, they are about as soundly deduced as that connexion which our old popular superstition imagined, between a high wind on Shrove Tuesday night, and mortality among learned men and fish.

GOWER. And yet how fascinating those dreams of science. What a charm, for instance, in a botany which essayed to read in the sprinkled or veined colours of petals and of leaves, in the soft-flushing hues, the winding lines, the dashes of crimson, amethyst, or gold, in the tracery of translucent tissues empurpled or incarnadine,—the planetary cipher, the hieroglyph of a star, the secret mark of elementary spirits—of the gliding Undine or the hovering Sylph.

WILLOUGHBY. So too, in great measure, with anatomy and psychology; for man was said to draw life from the central sun, and growth from the moon, while imagination was the gift of Mercury, and wrath burned down to him out of Mars. He was fashioned from the stars as well as from the earth, and born the lord of both.

ATHERTON. This close connexion between the terrestrial and sidereal worlds was to aid in the approximation of man to God. The aim was noble—to marry Natural Science, the lower, to Revealed Religion, the higher; elevating at once the world and man—the physical and the spiritual; drawing more close the golden chain which binds the world to the footstool of the eternal throne. While a spirit dwelt in all nature, transforming and restoring, and benign influences, entering into the substances and organisms of earth, blessed them according to their capacities of blessing (transforming some with ease to higher forms of beauty, labouring long, and almost lost in the gross-

ness and stubbornness of others), so also in the souls of men wrought the Divine Spirit, gladly welcomed by the lowly-hearted, darkly resisted by the proud, the grace of God here an odour of life, and there made a deepening of death upon death.

WILLOUGHBY. How close their parallel between the laws of receptivity in the inner world and in the outer. They brought their best, faithfully—these magi,—gold and frankincense and myrrh.

GOWER. Talking of sympathies, I have felt myself for the last quarter of an hour rapidly coming into *rapport* with those old poet-philosophers. I seem to thirst with them to pierce the mysteries of nature. I imagine myself one of their aspiring brotherhood. I say, to the dead let nature be dead; to me she shall speak her heart. The changeful expression, the speechless gestures of this world, the languors and convulsions of the elements, the frowns and smiles of the twin firmaments, shall have their articulate utterance for my ear. With the inward eye I see—here more dim, there distinct—the fine network of sympathetic influences playing throughout the universe, as the dancing meshes of the water-shadows on the sides of a basin of marble——

WILLOUGHBY, (*to Atherton, with a grotesque expression of pity.*) He's off! Almost out of sight already.

GOWER, (*apparently unconscious of the interruption.*) Yes, I will know what legends of the old elemental wars are stored within yon grey promontory, about whose grandsire knees the waves are gambolling; and what is the story of the sea—what are the passions of the deep that work those enamoured sleeps and jealous madresses; and what the meaning of that thunder-music which the hundred-handed surf smites out from the ebon or tawny keys of rock and of sand along so many far-winding solitary shores. I will know what the mountains dream of

when, under the summer haze, they talk in their sleep, and the common ear can perceive only the tinkle of the countless rills sliding down their sides. There shall be told me how first the Frost-King won his empire, and made the vanquished heights of earth to pass under those ice-harrows which men call glaciers.

ATHERTON. 'The truant Fancy was a wanderer ever!'

GOWER. On the commonest things I see astral influences raining brightness—no homeliness without some sparkle of the upper glory;—as the wain and shoon of the peasant on some autumn night grow phosphorescent, and are sown with electric jewellery. With purged eyesight I behold the nascent and unfledged virtues of herbs and minerals that are growing folded in this swaying nest named earth, look hungering up to their parent stars that hover ministering above, radiant in the topmost boughs of the Mundane Tree. I look into the heart of the Wunderberg, and see, far down, the palaces and churches of an under-world, see branching rivers and lustrous gardens where gold and silver flow and flower; I behold the Wild women, and the jealous dwarfs, and far away, the forlorn haunts of the cairn-people, harping under their mossy stones; while from the central depths sounds up to me the rolling litany of those giants who wait and worship till the Great Restitution-Day. There among those wilderness rocks I discern, under a hood of stone, a hermit Potency, waiting for one to lead him up to the sunny multitudinous surface-world, and send him forth to bless mankind. O long-tarrying Virtue, be it mine to open the doors of thy captivity! Thou mineral Might, thou fragment from the stones of the New Jerusalem, thou shalt lodge no more in vain among us! I have felt thy secret growing up within my soul, as a shoot of the tree of life, and therewithal will I go forth and heal the nations!²

² This distressing outbreak on the part of Gower will scarcely seem extravagant to those who remember how intensely poetical were many of the theosophic

ATHERTON. No, not till you have had some supper. I hear the bell.

GOWER. It is the nineteenth century, then? Ah, yes, I remember.

WILLOUGHBY. Away, you rogue !

hypotheses. Analogies which would only occur to imaginative men in their hours of reverie were solidified into principles and enrolled in the code of nature. Nothing could be more opposite to the sifting process of modern investigation than the fanciful combination and impersonation of those days,—more akin, by far, to mythology than to science. Conceits such as the following are those of the poet,—and of the poet as far gone in madness as Plato could wish him.

The waters of this world are mad ; it is in their raving that they rush so violently to and fro along the great channels of the earth.

Fire would not have burned, darkness had not been, but for Adam's fall. There is a hot fire and a cold. Death is a cold fire.—*Behmen*.

All things—even metals, stones, and meteors—have sense and imagination, and a certain 'fiducial' knowledge of God in them.

The arctic pole draws water by its axle-tree, and these waters break forth again at the axle-tree of the antarctic pole.

Earthquakes and thunder are the work of *dæmons* or angels.

The lightnings without thunder are, as it were, the falling flowers of the 'æstival' (or summer) stars.—*Paracelsus*.

Hail and snow are the fruits of the stars, proceeding from them as flowers and blossoms from herb or tree.—*Paracelsus*.

Night is, in reality, brought on by the influence of *dark stars*, which ray out darkness, as the others light.—*Paracelsus*.

The final fires will transform the earth into crystal. (A summary expression for one of Behmen's doctrines.)

The moon, planets, and stars are of the same quality with the lustrous precious stones of our earth, and of such a nature, that wandering spirits of the air see in them things to come, as in a magic mirror ; and hence their gift of prophecy.

In addition to the terrestrial, man has a sidereal body, which stands in connexion with the stars. When, as in sleep, this sidereal body is more free than usual from the elements, it holds converse with the stars, and may acquire a knowledge of future events.—*Paracelsus*. See Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, § 41.

CHAPTER V.

The reason that Men do not doubt of many things, is, that they never examine common Impressions ; they do not dig to the Root, where the Faults and Defects lye ; they only debate upon the Branches : They do not examine whether such and such a thing be true, but if it has been so and so understood. It is not inquir'd into, whether *Galen* has said anything to purpose, but whether he has said so or so.—MONTAIGNE.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—THIRD EVENING.

§ 3. *Theophrastus Paracelsus.*

DUE place must be given to the influence of that medical Ishmael, Paracelsus. Born in 1493 at Einsiedeln, near Zurich, he studied medicine at Basle, and travelled Europe for fourteen years from Sweden to Naples, and from France to Poland. The jealous hatred awakened by a most reasonable project of reform drove him from Basle soon after his return. Vituperated and vituperating, he became a wanderer throughout Germany, everywhere forming, or followed by, successive groups of disciples. He died at the age of forty-eight, in a little inn—but not, as report has long said, drunk on the taproom floor;—a victim, more probably, to the violence of assailants despatched against him by some hostile physicians.¹

Paracelsus found the medical profession of those days more disastrously incompetent, if possible, than we see it in the pages of Le Sage and Molière. It was so easy of entrance, he complains, as to become the tempting resource of knavery and ignorance everywhere. With a smattering of Greek a doctor

¹ See Lessing's *Paracelsus*, p. 18.

might be finished and famous. A dead language was to exorcise deadly maladies. Diseases were encountered by definitions, and fact and experiment unheeded amidst disputes about the sense of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna. When a new life began to struggle to the light from beneath the ruins of scholasticism, the fearless vehemence of such a nature became its appropriate organ. Paracelsus was the first to lecture in the vernacular. Instead of reading and commenting on the text of Galen, or extracting fanciful specifics from Raymond Lully, or John de Rupecissa, he resolved to observe and judge for himself wherever the ravages of disease or war might furnish him with facts. Preposterous as many of his own remedies may have been, he merits the title of a reformer in effect as well as purpose. He applied, with great success, mineral preparations before unknown, or little used; performed celebrated cures by the use of opium, and exposed the fraudulent pretensions of the alchemist and the astrologer. To the persecution and gross abuse of the profession he replied in torrents of undiluted and inexhaustible Billingsgate. While his velvet-cloaked brethren, with faces blandly inane or portentously inscrutable, mounted, with step of cat-like softness, to the chamber of the obese burgomaster or the fashionable lady, Paracelsus gloried in grandiloquent shabbiness and boisterous vulgarity. He boasted that he had picked up many a hint while chatting as an equal with pedlars, waggoners, and old women. He loved to drain his can on the ale-bench before wayside hostelries with boors such as Ostade has painted. Ragged and dusty, footing it with his knapsack on his back under a broiling sun, he would swear that there lay more wisdom in his beard than in all the be-doctored wiseacres of all the universities of Europe.

On the basis of principles substantially the same with those represented by Agrippa, Paracelsus developed, in his own way,

the doctrine of signatures, and the relationships of the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The special illumination of the Holy Ghost was not more essential to the monastic perfection of preceding mystics, than to the success of the theosophist in that devout pursuit of science inculcated by Paracelsus. The true Physician—he who would be wise indeed in the mysteries of nature, must seek with ceaseless importunity the light that cometh from above. In the Scriptures, and in the Cabbala, lies the key to all knowledge. Medicine has four pillars: (1) *Philosophy*, generally equivalent, as he uses it, to physiology,—the study of the true nature of material substances in their relation to the microcosm, man; (2) *Astronomy*, embracing especially the influences of the heavenly bodies on the human frame; (3) *Alchemy*, not gold-making, but the preparation of specifics—chemistry applied to medicine; (4) *Religion*, whereby the genuine professor of the healing art is taught of God, and works in reliance on, and union with, Him.² In the spirit of the ancient mystics he describes the exaltation of one whose soul is inwardly absorbed, so that the ordinary operation of the external senses is suspended. A man thus divinely intoxicated, lost in thoughts so profound, may seem, says Paracelsus, a mere fool to the men of this world, but in the eyes of God he is the wisest of mankind, a partaker of the secrecy of the Most High.³ Like Agrippa (and with as good reason) Paracelsus lays great stress on Imagination, using the term, apparently, to express the highest realization of faith. Bacon observes that Imagination is with Paracelsus almost equivalent to Fascination. He speaks of the Trinity as imaged in man, in the Heart, (*Gemüth*), in Faith, and in Imagination,—the three forms of that spiritual nature in

² Lessing's *Paracelsus*, § 26.

³ Language to this effect is cited among the copious extracts given by

Godfrey Arnold, *Kirchen-und-Ketzer-geschichte*, Th. ii. p. 309.

us which he declares a fiery particle from the Divine Substance. By the disposition of the Heart we come to God ; by Faith to Christ ; and by Imagination we receive the Holy Spirit. Thus blessed (did we but truly know our own hearts) nothing would be impossible to us. This is the true magic, the gift of Faith, which, were its strength sufficient, might even now cast out devils, heal the sick, raise the dead, and remove mountains.⁴

In the sixteenth century we still trace the influence of that doctrine, so fertile in mysticism, which Anselm bequeathed to the schoolmen of the middle age. We are to know by ascending to the fount of being, and in the primal Idea, whence all ideas flow, to discern the inner potency of all actual existence. But in Paracelsus we see especial prominence given to two new ideas which greatly modify, and apparently facilitate the researches of theosophy. One of these is the theory of divine manifestation by *Contraries*,—teaching (instead of the old division of Being and Non-being) the development of the primal ground of existence by antithesis, and akin, in fact, to the principle of modern speculative philosophy, according to which the Divine Being is the absorption (*Aufhebung*) of those contraries which his self-evolution, or *lusus amoris*, has posited. This doctrine is the key-note in the system of Jacob Behmen. The other is the assumption that man—the micro-cosm, is, as it were, a miniature of the macro-cosm—the great outer world,—a little parliament to which every part of the universe sends its deputy,—his body a compound from the four circles of material existence,—his animal nature correspondent to, and dependent on, the upper firmament,—and his spirit, a divine efflux wherein, though fallen, there dwells a magnetic tendency towards its source, which renders redemption possible through Christ.

⁴ *De Occulta Philosophia, Prologus*, p. 30, and p. 58. This is one of the three treatises edited by Gerard Dorn,

and published together in a small volume, Basle, 1584. Comp. also Arnold, Th. iv. p. 145.

There is nothing, accordingly, in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, which may not be found in the minor world of man. On this principle, further, depends the whole system of signatures in its application to the cure of human malady.⁵

Paracelsus defines true magic as the knowledge of the hidden virtues and operations of natural objects. The Cabbala imparts instruction concerning heavenly mysteries, and teaches the loftiest approximation to the Supreme. By the combination of these sources of knowledge we come to understand, and can partially produce, that marriage between heavenly influences and terrestrial objects, called, in the language of theosophy, *Gamahea*.⁶ True magic is founded solely 'on the Ternary and Trinity of God,' and works in harmony with that universal life which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, animates all nature,—even the granite, the ocean, and the flower. The magic of Paracelsus disclaims the use of all ceremonies, conjurations, bannings, and blessings, and will rest solely on the power of that faith to which the promise was given, that spirits should be subject to it, and mountains plucked up at its fiat.⁷ We are here far enough from the theurgic ritual of Iamblichus. But large room still remained for superstitious practice, and Paracelsus could not refuse his faith to the potency of certain magical words, of waxen images, and of pentacula inscribed with magic characters. The universal life of nature was mythologically personified in the sylphs and gnomes, the salamanders and undines, somewhat as the thought of supernatural presence found its representation

⁵ Dorn's *Dictionarium Paracelsi* (Frankfort, 1583), Art. Microcosmus. Also the *Secretum Magicum* of Paracelsus, entire in Arnold, p. 150. The implanted image of the Trinity, and the innate tendency in man toward his Divine Origin, are familiar to us as favourite doctrines with the mystics of the fourteenth century.

⁶ *De Occ. Phil.* cap. iv. p. 45, and cap. xi. p. 78. Also, *Dict. Paracels.*

Art. Magia. Talis influentiarum cœlestium conjunctio vel impressio qua operantur in inferiora corpora cœlestes vires, *Gamahea* Magis, vel matrimonium virium et proprietatum cœlestium cum elementaribus corporibus, dicta fuit olim.—Paracelsi *Aurora Philosophorum*, cap. iv. p. 24 (ed. Dorn).

⁷ *Aurora Phil.* loc. cit. ; *De Occ. Phil.* i. ii. ; and xi. p. 79.

in the nymphs, the nereids, and the hamadryads, of ancient Grecian fable.⁸

In the chemistry of Paracelsus all matter is composed, in varying proportions, of salt—the firm coherent principle, of quicksilver—the fluid, and of sulphur—the fiery, or combustible.⁹

The theory of signatures proceeded on the supposition that every creature bears, in some part of its structure or outward conformation, the indication of the character or virtue inherent in it—the representation, in fact, of its idea or soul. Southey relates, in his *Doctor*, a legend, according to which he who should drink the blood of a certain unknown animal would be enabled to hear the voice and understand the speech of plants. Such a man might stand on a mountain at sunrise, and hearken to their language, from the delicate voices of wild flowers and grass blades in the dew, to the large utterance of the stately trees making their obeisance in the fresh morning airs;—might hear each enumerating its gifts and virtues, and blessing the Creator for his bestowments. The knowledge thus imparted by a charm, the student of sympathies sought as the result of careful observation. He essayed to read the character of plants by signs in their organization, as the professor of palmistry announced that of men by the lines of the hand. Such indications were sometimes traced from the resemblance of certain parts of a plant to portions of the human frame, sometimes they were sought in the more recondite relations of certain plants to certain stars. Thus citrons, according to Paracelsus, are good

⁸ See *De Occ. Phil.* cap. v. Magical powers are ascribed to images, p. 85. A collection of talismanic figures is appended to the treatise. In the *Thesaurus Philosophorum* is to be found (p. 145) the arcanum of the Homunculus and the Universal Tincture. The Homunculus is said to be a mannikin, constructed by magic, receiving his life and substance from an artificial principle, and able to

communicate to his fabricator all manner of secrets and mysteries of science.

⁹ The three continents—Europe, Asia, and Africa—were said to represent these three constituent principles respectively; the stars contain them, as in so many vials; the Penates (a race of sapient but mortal spirits) employ them for the manufacture of thunder.

for heart affections because they are heart-shaped; and because, moreover, they have the colour of the sun, and the heart is, in a sort, the sun of the body. Similarly, the *saphena riparum* is to be applied to fresh wounds, because its leaves are spotted as with flecks of blood. A species of *dentaria*, whose roots resemble teeth, is a cure for toothache and scurvy.¹⁰

The theosophists, working on principles very similar to those of the alchemists, though with worthier and larger purpose, inherited the extraordinary language of their predecessors. That wisdom of Gamahea, which was to explain and facilitate the union of the celestial and terrestrial in the phenomena and processes of nature, naturally produced a phraseology which was a confused mixture of theological, astrological, and chemical terms. To add to the obscurity, every agent or process was veiled under symbolic names and fantastic metaphors, frequently changing with the caprice of the adept. Thus the white wine of Lully is called by Paracelsus the glue of the eagle; and Lully's red wine is, with Paracelsus, the blood of the Red Lion. Often the metaphor runs into a kind of parable, as with Bernard of Treviso. He describes what is understood to be the solution of gold in quicksilver, under the regimen of Saturn, leaving a residuum of black paste, in the following oriental style:—

‘The king, when he comes to the fountain, leaving all strangers behind him, enters the bath alone, clothed in golden robes, which he puts off, and gives to Saturn, his first chamberlain, from whom he receiveth a black velvet suit.’¹¹

¹⁰ Lessing's *Paracelsus*, § 58. This fanciful kind of physiognomy displaces theurgy, among these inquirers. It led, at least, to much accurate observation. It was a sign of health when the chafing-dish and conjuring-book were forsaken for the woods and fields. Cardan, who repudiates the charge of having ever employed incantations or sought intercourse with dæmons, endeavours to establish chiromancy on what were then called

astronomical principles. Thus, Mars rules the thumb, wherein lies strength; Jupiter, the forefinger, whence come auguries of fame and honour, &c.

¹¹ See *Lives of the Alchemistical Philosophers*. This book contains a collection of the most celebrated treatises on the theory and practice of the Hermetic Art. The passage from Bernard is in *The Book of Eirenæus Philalethes*, p. 166.

In like manner, in the *Secretum Magicum* attributed (to Paracelsus), we find mention of the chemical Virgin Mary, of chemical deaths and resurrections, falls and redemptions, adopted from theological phraseology. We read of the union of the philosophic Sol,—Quintessentia Solis, or Fifth Wisdom of Gold, with his Father in the Golden Heaven, whereby imperfect substances are brought to the perfection of the Kingdom of Gold.¹²

The conclusion of Weidenfeld's treatise on the Green Lion of Paracelsus may suffice as a specimen of this fanciful mode of expression, which can never speak directly, and which, adopted by Jacob Behmen, enwraps his obscure system in sevenfold darkness:—

‘Let us therefore desist from further pursuit of the said Green Lion which we have pursued through the meads and forest of Diana, through the way of philosophical Saturn, even to the vineyards of Philosophy. This most pleasant place is allowed the disciples of this art to recreate themselves here, after so much pains and sweat, dangers of fortune and life, exercising the work of women and the sports of children, being content with the most red blood of the Lion, and eating the white or red grapes of Diana, the wine of which being purified, is the most secret secret of all the more secret Chymy; as being the white or red wine of Lully, the nectar of the ancients, and their only desire, the peculiar refreshment of the adopted sons, but the heart-breaking and stumblingblock of the scornful and ignorant.’¹³

¹² Thus, Cardan declared that the law of Moses was from Saturn; that of Christ, from Jupiter and Mercury. Over that of Mahomet presided, in conjunction, Sol and Mars; while Mars and the Moon ruled idolatry. It was thought no impiety—only a legitimate explanation, to attribute the supernatural wisdom and works of our

Lord to the divinely-ordained influences of the planetary system.

¹³ This passage is from the Annotations of Weidenfeld on the *Green Lion* of Paracelsus; *Lives of the Alchem. Phil.* p. 201. The *Thesaurus The-saurorum* contains another choice specimen of the same sort, p. 124.

CHAPTER VI.

Men. I pray thee tell me,
For thou art a great dreamer—

Chi. I can dream, sir,
If I eat well and sleep well.

Men. Was it never by dream or apparition opened to thee—
What the other world was, or Elysium?
Didst never travel in thy sleep?

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER : *The Mad Lover.*

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—FOURTH EVENING.

§ 4. *Jacob Behmen and his Aurora.*

LET us now crave acquaintance with that most notable theosophist, Jacob Behmen.

It is evening, and in the little town of Görlitz the business of the day is over. The shopkeepers are chatting together before their doors, or drinking their beer at tables set out in the open air; and comfortable citizens are taking wife and children for a walk beyond the town. There is a shoemaker's shop standing close to the bridge, and under its projecting gable, among the signs and samples of the craft, may be read the name of Jacob Boehme. Within this house, in a small and scantily-furnished room, three men are seated at a table whereon lie a few books and papers and a great heap of newly-gathered plants and wild-flowers. The three friends have just returned from a long ramble in the fields which lie without the Neissethor. That little man, apparently about forty years of age, of withered, almost mean, aspect, with low forehead, prominent temples, hooked nose, short and scanty beard, and quick blue eyes, who talks with a thin, gentle voice,

is, Jacob.¹ On one side of him sits Dr. Kober, a medical man of high repute in Görlitz. He it is who gathered in their walk these flowers, and now he takes up one of them from time to time, and asks Behmen to conjecture, from its form and colour, its peculiar properties. Often has he to exchange looks of wonder with his learned friend on the other side the table, at the marvellous insight of their uneducated host. This third member of the trio is Dr. Balthasar Walter, the Director of the Laboratory at Dresden, a distinguished chemist, who has travelled six years in the East, has mastered all the scientific wisdom of the West, and who now believes that his long search after the true philosophy has ended happily at last, beneath the roof of the Görlitz shoemaker. He, too, will sometimes pronounce a Greek or an Oriental word, and is surprised to find how nearly Behmen divines its significance, from the mere sound and the movement of the lips in the formation of its syllables.² When Walter utters the word *Idea*, Behmen springs up in a transport, and declares that the sound presented to him the image of a heavenly virgin of surpassing beauty. The conversation wanders on—about some theosophic question, it may be, or the anxious times, or the spread of Behmen's writings through Silesia and Saxony, with the persecutions or the praises following; while good Frau Behmen, after putting a youngster or two to bed, is busy downstairs in the kitchen, preparing a frugal supper.

Jacob Behmen was born at the village of Alt-Seidenberg, near Görlitz, in the year 1575. As a child, he was grave and thoughtful beyond his years. The wonders of fairy tradition were said to have become objects of immediate vision to the boy, as were the mysteries of religion, in after years, to the man.

¹ The personal appearance of Behmen is thus described by his friend and biographer, Abraham von

Franckenberg, in the biography prefixed to his Works, § 27.

² See Note on p. 88.

Among the weather-stained boulders of a haunted hill, the young herd-boy discovered the golden hoard of the mountain folk—fled in terror, and could never again find out the spot.³

While not yet twenty, Behmen saw life as a travelling apprentice. The tender conscience and the pensive temperament of the village youth shrank from the dissolute and riotous companionship of his fellow-craftsmen. Like George Fox, whom at this period he strongly resembled, he found the Church scarcely more competent than the world to furnish the balm which should soothe a spirit at once excited and despondent. Among the clergy, the shameful servility of some, the immoral life of others, the bigotry of almost all, repelled him on every hand. The pulpit was the whipping-post of imaginary Papists and Calvinists. The churches were the fortified places in the seat of war. They were spiritually what ours were literally in King Stephen's days, when the mangonel and the cross-bow bolts stood ready on the battlemented tower, when military stores were piled in the crypt, and a moat ran through the churchyard. The *Augsburg Confession* and the *Formula Concordiæ* were appealed to as though of inspired authority. The names of Luther and Melancthon were made the end of controversy and of freedom. The very principle of Protestantism was forsaken when ecclesiastics began to prove their positions, not by Scripture, but by Articles of Faith. So Behmen wandered about, musing, with his Bible in his hand, and grieved sore because of the strife among Christian brethren, because evil everywhere was spreading and fruitful, and goodness so rare and so distressed ; because he saw, both near and far away, such seeming waste and loss of human souls. A profound melancholy took possession of him—partly that the truth which would give rest was for himself so hard to find, but most for the sight of his eyes which he saw, when he looked abroad

³ *Lebens-lauff*, § 4.

upon God's rational creatures. On his return from his travels he settled in Görlitz, married early, and worked hard at his trade. Everywhere these anxious questing thoughts about life's mystery are with him, disquieting. He reads many mystical and astrological books, not improbably, even thus early, Schwenkfeld and Paracelsus.⁴ But the cloudy working of his mind is not soon to give place to sunshine and clear sky. He is to be found still with the pelican and the bittern in the desolate places where the salt-pits glisten, and the nettles breed, and the wild beasts lie down, and the cedar work is uncovered,—among the untimely ruins of that City of Hope which had almost won back Christendom in the resistless prime of Luther.

At last, upon an ever-memorable day, as he sat meditating in his room, he fell, he knew not how, into a kind of trance. The striving, climbing sorrows of his soul had brought him to this luminous table-land. A halcyon interval succeeded to the tempest. He did not seek, he gazed; he was surrounded by an atmosphere of glory. He enjoyed for seven days an unruffled soul-sabbath. He looked into the open secret of creation and providence. Such seemed his ecstasy. In Amadis of Greece

⁴ See his own account of his mental conflict and melancholy, issuing in the rapturous intuition which solved all his doubts, *Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 1-13. He acknowledges having read many astrological books. *Aurora*, cap. xxv. § 43: Ja, lieber, Leser, ich verstehe der Astrologorum Meinung auch wol, ich habe auch ein paar zeilen in ihren Schrifften gelesen, und weiss wol wie sie den Lauf der Sonnen und Sternen schreiben, ich verachte es auch nicht, sondern halte es meisten Theil für gut und recht. Compare also cap. x. § 27: Ich habe viel holier Meister Schrifften gelesen, in Hoffnung den Grund und die rechte Tieffe darinnen zu finden, aber ich habe nichts funden

als einen halb-todten Geist, &c. In a letter to Caspar Lindern he mentions sundry mystical writers concerning whom his correspondent appears to have desired his opinion,—admits that several of them were men of high spiritual gifts, not to be despised, though in many respects capable of amendment,—says that they were of good service in their time, and would probably express themselves otherwise did they write now,—shows where he thinks Schwenkfeld wrong in affirming Christ's manhood to be no creature, and speaks of Weigel as erring in like manner by denying the Saviour's true humanity.—*Theosoph. Sendbr.* §§ 52-60.

an enchanter shuts up the heroes and princesses of the tale in the Tower of the Universe, where all that happened in the world was made to pass before them, as in a magic glass, while they sat gazing, bound by the age-long spell. So Behmen believed that the principles of the Universal Process were presented to his vision as he sat in his study at Görlitz. We may say that it was the work of all his after days to call to mind, to develop for himself, and to express for others, the seminal suggestions of that and one following glorious dream.

Behmen was twenty-five years of age when the subject of this first illumination. He stated that he was thrown into his trance while gazing on the dazzling light reflected from a tin vessel, as the rays of the sun struck into his room. Distrusting at first the nature of the vision, he walked out into the fields to dissipate the phantasmagoria; but the strange hues and symbols were still present, and seemed to point him to the heart and secret of the universe. For several years his gift lay hidden. Behmen was known as a quiet, meditative, hard-working man, fond of books; otherwise scarcely distinguishable from other cobblers. Ten years after the first manifestation he believed himself the recipient of a second, not, like the former, mediated by anything external; and revealing, with greater fulness and order, what before lay in comparative confusion. To fix this communication in a form which might be of abiding service to him, he began to write his *Aurora*.

But he shall tell his own story, as he did tell it, one-and-twenty years later, to his friend Caspar Lindern.

'I saw and knew,' he says, 'the Being of all Beings, the Byss (*Grund*) and the Abyss: *item*, the birth of the Holy Trinity; the origin and primal state of this world and of all creatures through the Divine Wisdom. I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds,—*i.e.* (1) the divine angelic or paradisiacal world; then, (2) the dark world, as the original of nature, as to the

fire ; and (3) this external visible world, as a creation and out-birth, or as a substance spoken forth out of the two inner spiritual worlds. Moreover, I saw and had cognizance of the whole Being in good and in evil—how each had its origin in the other, and how the Mother did bring forth ;—and this all moved me not merely to the height of wonder, but made me to rejoice exceedingly. (Incredible as it may appear, this passage *has* a meaning, which may become apparent to some readers after a perusal of what is said farther on, in explanation of Behmen's system.)

‘Soon it came strongly into my mind that I should set the same down in writing, for a memorial, albeit I could hardly compass the understanding thereof in my external man, so as to write it on paper. I felt that with such great mysteries I must set to work as a child that goes to school. In my inward man I saw it well, as in a great deep, for I saw right through as into a chaos in which everything lay wrapped, but the unfolding thereof I found impossible.

‘Yet from time to time it opened itself within me, as in a growing plant. For the space of twelve years I carried it about within me—was, as it were, pregnant therewith, feeling a mighty inward impulse, before I could bring it forth in any external form ; till afterwards it fell upon me, like a bursting shower that hitteth wheresoever it lighteth, as it will. So it was with me, and whatsoever I could bring into outwardness that I wrote down.

‘Thereafter the sun shone on me a good while, yet not steadily and without interval, and when that light had withdrawn itself I could scarce understand my own work. And this was to show man that his knowledge is not his own, but God's, and that God in man's soul knoweth what and how he will.

‘This writing of mine I purposed to keep by me all my life,

and not to give it into the hands of any man. But it came to pass in the providence of the Most High, that I entrusted a person with part of it, by whose means it was made known without my knowledge. Whereupon my first book, the *Aurora*, was taken from me, and because many wondrous things were therein revealed, not to be comprehended in a moment by the mind of man, I had to suffer no little at the hands of the worldly-wise—(*von den Vernunft-weisen*).

‘For three years I saw no more of this said book, and thought it verily clean dead and gone, till some learned men sent me copies therefrom, exhorting me not to bury my talent. To this counsel my outward reason was in no wise willing to agree, having suffered so much already. My reason was very weak and timorous at that time, the more so as the light of grace had then been withdrawn from me some while, and did but smoulder within, like a hidden fire. So I was filled with trouble. Without was contempt, within, a fiery driving; and what to do I knew not, till the breath of the Most High came to my help again, and awoke within me a new life. Then it was that I attained to a better style of writing, likewise to a deeper and more thorough knowledge. I could reduce all better to outward form—as, indeed, my book concerning *The Threefold Life through the Three Principles* doth fully show, and as the godly reader whose heart is opened will see.

‘So, therefore, have I written, not from book-learning, or the doctrine and science of men, but from my own book which was opened within me,—the book of the glorious image of God, which it was vouchsafed to me to read: ’tis therein I have studied—as a child in its mother’s house, that sees what its father doth, and mimics the same in its child’s-play. I need no other book than this.

‘My book has but three leaves—the three principles of Eternity. Therein I find all that Moses and the prophets,

Christ and his apostles, have taught. Therein I find the foundation of the world and all mystery,—yet, not I, but the Spirit of the Lord doth it, in such measure as He pleaseth.

‘For hundreds of times have I prayed him that if my knowledge were not for his glory and the edifying of my brethren, he will take it from me, only keeping me in his love. But I have found that with all my earnest entreaty the fire within me did but burn the more, and it is in this glow, and in this knowledge, that I have produced my works.

‘Let no man conceive of me more highly than he here seeth, for the work is none of mine ; I have it only in that measure vouchsafed me of the Lord ; I am but his instrument wherewith he doeth what he will. This, I say, my dear friend, once for all, that none may seek in me one other than I am, as though I were a man of high skill and intellect, whereas I live in weakness and childhood, and the simplicity of Christ. In that child’s work which he hath given me is my pastime and my play ; ’tis there I have my delight, as in a pleasure-garden where stand many glorious flowers ; therewith will I make myself glad awhile, till such time as I regain the flowers of Paradise in the new man.’⁵

This letter alludes to the way in which the *Aurora* was made public without the knowledge of its author. The friend to whom he showed it was Karl von Endern, who, struck by its contents, caused a copy to be taken, from which others were rapidly multiplied. The book fell into the hands of Gregory Richter, the chief pastor in Görlitz. Well may Behmen say that the *Aurora* contained some things not readily apprehended by human reason. A charitable man would have forgiven its extravagances, catching some glimpses of a sincere and religious purpose ; a wise man would have said nothing about it ; a man the wisest of the wise would have been the last to pretend to

⁵ *Theosoph. Sendbr.* xii. §§ 8-20.

understand it. But Richter—neither charitable nor wise exceedingly, nor even moderately stocked with good sense—fell into a blundering passion, and railed at Behmen from the pulpit, as he sat in his place at church, crimson, but patient, the centre of all eyes.

Behmen had already rendered himself obnoxious to Richter by a temperate but firm remonstrance against an act of ecclesiastical oppression. Now, his pretensions seem openly to militate against that mechanical religious monopoly with which Richter imagined himself endowed,—a privilege as jealously watched and as profitably exercised by such men as that of the muezzins of the mosque of Bajazet, who are alone entitled to supply the faithful with the praying compasses that indicate the orthodox attitude. The insolent, heretical, blasphemous cobbler shall find no mercy. Richter loudly calls for the penalties of law, to punish a fanatic who has taught (as he declares) that the Son of God is Quicksilver! Görlitz magistrates, either of the Shallow family, or, it may be, overborne by the blustering Rector, pronounce Behmen ‘a villain full of piety,’ and banish him the town. But by the next day the tide would appear to have turned, and the exile is brought back with honour. The shoemaker’s booth is the scene of a little ovation, while Richter fumes at the parsonage. Behmen, however, must give up the manuscript of the *Aurora*, and is required for the future to stick to his last.

His book, as it became known, procured him many influential friends among men of learning and men of rank throughout Lusatia. He was exhorted not to hide his talent, and the ensuing five years became a period of incessant literary activity.⁶

⁶ A full account of the persecution raised by Gregory Richter against Behmen, was drawn up by Cornelius Weissner, a doctor of medicine, and is appended by Franckenberg to his

biography. A young man, who had married a relative of Behmen’s, had been so terrified by the threatenings of divine wrath launched at him by Richter, about some trifling money

The scholarship of friends like Kober and Walther assisted him to supply some of the defects of his education ; the liberality of others provided for his moderate wants, and enabled him to forsake his business for his books.⁷ Once more did his old enemy, the primarius Richter, appear against him, with a pamphlet of virulent pasquinades in Latin verse. Behmen issued an elaborate reply, entering minutely into every charge, sending the clerical curses 'home to roost,' and praying for the enlightenment of his persecutor with exasperating good temper.⁸ The magistrates, fluttered and anxious, requested him to leave Görlitz. Knightly friends opened their castle gates to him ; he preferred retirement at Dresden. There, a public disputation he held with some eminent divines and men of science, was said to have excited general admiration. He returned to Görlitz in his last illness, to die in the midst of his family. He expired early on Sunday morning, on the twenty-first of November, 1624, in his fiftieth year. He asked his son Tobias if he heard the beautiful music, and bade those about him set the doors open that the sounds might enter. After receiving the sacrament, he breathed his last, at the hour of which a presentiment of dissolution had warned him. His last words were, 'Now I am going to Paradise !'⁹

matter, that he fell into a profound melancholy. Behmen comforted the distressed baker, and ventured to remonstrate with the enraged primarius, becoming ever after a marked man. For seven years after the affair or the Aurora, in 1612, Behmen refrained from writing. Everything he published subsequently was produced between the years 1619 and 1624, inclusive.

⁷ Thus he thanks Christian Bernard for a small remittance of money.—*Theos. Sendbr.* ix. Sept. 12, 1620.

⁸ *Apologia wider den Primarium zu Görlitz Gregorium Richter*, written in 1624.

⁹ Vide Corn. Weissner's *Wahrhafte Relation*, &c., and Franckenberg's account of his last hours, § 29.

NOTE TO PAGE 80.

Behmen's learned friends were accustomed thus to test the insight they so revered, and would occasionally attempt to mislead his sagacity by wrong terms and entrapping questions ; but always, we are assured, without success. See *Ein Schreiben von einem vornehmen Patritio und Rathsverwandten zu Görlitz wegen seel. Jac. Behmen's Person und Schriften*, appended to Franckenberg's Life of Behmen.

The rationale of this peculiar significance of letters and syllables he gives in the following passage :—

When man fell into sin, he was removed from the inmost birth and set in the other two, which presently encompassed him, and mingled their influences with him and in him (*inqualireten mit ihme und in ihme*), as in their own peculiar possession ; and man received the spirit and the whole generation of the sidereal, and also of the external birth. Therefore he now speaks all words according to the indwelling generative principle of nature. For the spirit of man, which stands in the sidereal birth, and combines with all nature, and is as all nature itself, shapes the word according to the indwelling principle of birth. When he sees anything he gives it a name answering to its peculiar property or virtue ; and if he does this he must fashion the word in the form, and generate it with his voice in the way in which the thing he names generates ; and herein lies the kernel of the whole understanding of the Godhead.—*Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 74-76. On this principle he examines, syllable by syllable, the opening words of Genesis—not those of the Hebrew, but the German version (!), as follows :—‘*Am Anfang schuff Gott*,’ &c. These words we must very carefully consider. The word AM takes its rise in the heart, and goes as far as the lips. There it is arrested, and goes sounding back to whence it came. Now, this shows that the sound went forth from the heart of God, and encompassed the entire *locus* of the world ; but when it was found to be evil, then the sound returned to its place again. The word AN pushes forth from the heart to the mouth, and has a long stress. But when it is pronounced, it closes in its *sedes* in the midst with the roof of the mouth, and is half without and half within. This signifies that the heart of God felt repugnance at the corruption of the world, and cast the corrupt nature from him, but again seized and stayed it in the midst by his heart. Just as the tongue arrests the word, and retains it half without and half within, so the heart of God would not utterly reject the enflamed Salitter, but would defeat the schemes and malice of the Devil, and finally restore the other.—*Aurora*, cap. xviii. §§ 48-52. A similar precious piece of nonsense is to be found, cap. xviii. §§ 72, &c. of which *Barmherzig* is the thema. He declares, in another place, that when the spiritual Aurora shall shine from the rising of the sun to the going-down of the same, RA. RA. R.P. shall be driven into banishment, and with him AM. R. P. These are secret words, he says, only to be understood in the language of nature.—*Aurora*, xxvi. 120.

Behmen was indebted to his conversations with men like Kober and Walther for much of his terminology, and probably to the suggestions awakened by such intercourse for much of the detailed application of his system. See *Lebens-lauff*, § 20 ; and compare the *Clavis*, or *Schlüssel etlicher vornehmen Punkten*, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

When I myself from mine own self do quit,
And each thing else ; then all-spreaden love
To the vast Universe my soul doth fit,
Makes me half equall to all-seeing Jove.
My mighty wings high stretch'd then clapping light,
I brush the stars and make them shine more bright.

Then all the works of God with close embrace
I dearly hug in my enlarged arms,
All the hid pathes of heavenly love I trace,
And boldly listen to his secret charms.
Then clearly view I where true light doth rise,
And where eternal Night low-pressed lies.

HENRY MORE.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—FIFTH EVENING.

§ 5. *Jacob Behmen—his Materials and Style of Workmanship.*

IT has been too much the custom to regard Jacob Behmen as a kind of speculative Melchisedek—a prodigy without doctrinal father or mother. Let us endeavour to form a correct estimate of the debt he owes to his mystical predecessors.

The much-pondering shoemaker consulted the writings of Schwenkfeld and Weigel in his distress. He found these authors crying unceasingly, 'Barren are the schools ; barren are all forms ; barren—worse than barren, these exclusive creeds, this deadly polemic letter.' Weigel bids him withdraw into himself and await, in total passivity, the incoming of the divine Word, whose light reveals unto the babe what is hidden from the wise and prudent. By the same writer he is reminded that he lives in God, and taught that if God also dwell in him, then is he even here in Paradise—the state of regenerate souls. Paracelsus extols the power of faith to penetrate the mysteries

of nature, and shows him how a plain man, with his Bible only, if he be filled with the Spirit and carried out of himself by divine communication, may seem to men a fool, but is in truth more wise than all the doctors. Weigel says that man, as body, soul, and spirit, belongs to three worlds—the terrestrial, the astral, and the celestial. Both Weigel and Paracelsus teach him the doctrine of the microcosm. They assure him that as divine illumination reveals to him the mysteries of his own being, he will discern proportionately the secrets of external nature. They teach that all language, art, science, handicraft, exists potentially in man ; that all apparent acquisition from without is in reality a revival and evolution of that which is within.

These instructors furnish the basis of Behmen's mysticism. Having drunk of this somewhat heady vintage, he is less disposed than ever to abandon his search. He will sound even those abysmal questions so often essayed, and so often, after all, resigned, as beyond the range of human faculties. If, according to the promise, importunate prayer can bring him light, then shall light be his. When he asks for an answer from above to his speculative enquiry into the nature of the Trinity, the processes of creation, the fall of angels, the secret code of those warring forces whose conflict produces the activity and vicissitudes of life, he does not conceive that he implores any miraculous intervention. Provision was made, he thought, for knowledge thus beyond what is written, in the very constitution of man's nature. Such wisdom was but the realization, by the grace of God, of our inborn possibilities. It was making actual what had otherwise been only potential. It was bringing into consciousness an implicit acquaintance with God and nature which was involved in the very idea of man as the offspring of the Creator and the epitome of creation.

But of what avail is light on any minor province of enquiry, while the fundamental perplexity is unsolved,—Whence and

what is evil, and why so masterful? How could King Vortigern build his great fortress upon Salisbury Plain, when every day's work was overthrown in the night by an earthquake—the result of that nocturnal combat in the bowels of the earth between the blood-red and the milk-white dragons? And how, pray, was Behmen to come to rest about his own doubts—far less erect a system,—till he had reconciled the contradiction at the root of all? The eternal opposites must harmonize in some higher unity. Here Paracelsus is Behmen's Merlin. The doctrine of Development by Contraries was passed, in the torch-race of opinion, from Sebastian Frank to Paracelsus, and from him to Weigel. According to this theory, God manifests himself in opposites. The peace of Unity develops into the strife of the Manifold. All things consist in Yea and Nay. The light must have shadow, day night, laughter tears, health sickness, hope fear, good evil, or they would not be what they are. Only by resistance, only in collision, is the spark of vitality struck out, is power realized, and progress possible. Of this hypothesis I shall have more to say hereafter. It is the chief estate of Behmen's inheritance. Theosophy bequeathed him, in addition, sundry lesser lands ;—namely, the Paracelsian Triad of Sulphur, Salt, and Mercury ; the doctrine of the vitality of the world, with the 'Fifth Element,' or 'Breath of Life,' for Mundane Soul; the theory of sympathies, stellar influence, signatures ; and the alchemico-astrotheologico jargon of the day.

Such, then, were Behmen's principal materials. His originality is displayed in a most ingenious arrangement and development of them ; especially in their application to theology and the interpretation of Scripture.

The description furnished us by Behmen himself of the deciding epoch of his life, indicates the kind of illumination to which he laid claim. The light thus enjoyed was not shed upon a mind from which all the inscriptions of memory had been

effaced, to produce that blank so coveted by the mystics of a former day. The cloud of glory magnified and refracted the results of those theosophic studies to which he confesses himself addicted.

The topographer of Fairyland, Ludwig Tieck, tells us that when the Elf-children scatter gold-dust on the ground, waving beds of roses or of lilies instantly spring up. They plant the seed of the pine, and in a moment mimic pine-trees rise under their feet, carrying upward, with the growth of their swaying arms, the laughing little ones. So swiftly, so magically—not by labouring experiment and gradual induction, but in the blissful stillness of one ecstatic and consummate week,—arose the Forms and Principles of Behmen's system, and with them rose the seer. But how, when the season of vision is over, shall he retain and represent the complex intricacies of the Universal Organism in the heart of which he found himself? Memory can only recal the mystery in fragments. Reflection can with difficulty supplement and harmonize those parts. Language can describe but superficially and in succession what the inner eye beheld throughout and at once. The fetters of time and space must fall once more on the recovered consciousness of daily life. We have heard Behmen describe the throes he underwent, the difficulties he overcame, as he persevered in the attempt to give expression to the suggestions he received.¹ How long it is before he sees

The lovely members of the mighty whole—
Till then confused and shapeless to his soul,—
Distinct and glorious grow upon his sight,
The fair enigmas brighten from the Night.

¹ While regarding as infallibly certain the main features of the doctrine communicated to him, Behmen is quite ready to admit the imperfect character both of his knowledge and his setting forth thereof. Light was communi-

cated to him, he said, by degrees, at uncertain intervals, and never unmingled with obscurity.—*Aurora*, cap. vii. § 11; cap. x. § 26, and often elsewhere.

To us, who do not share Behmen's delusion, who see in his condition the extraordinary, but nowise the supernatural, it is clear that this difficulty was so great, not from the sublime character of these cosmical revelations, but because of the utter confusion his thoughts were in. Glimpses, and snatches, and notions of possible reply to his questions, raying through as from holes in a shutter, reveal the clouds of dust in that unswept brain of his, where medical recipes and theological doctrines, the hard names of alchemy and the super-subtile fancies of theosophy, have danced a whirlwind saraband. Yet he believed himself not without special divine aid in his endeavours to develop into speech the seed of thought deposited within him. He apologises for bad spelling, bad grammar, abbreviations, omissions, on the ground of the impetuosity with which the divine impulse hurried forward his feeble pen.² Unfortunately for a hypothesis so flattering, he improves visibly by practice, like ordinary folk.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that Behmen and the mystics are partly right and partly wrong in turning from books and schools to intuition, when they essay to pass the ordinary bounds of knowledge and to attain a privileged gnosis. It is true that no method of human wisdom will reveal to men the hidden things of the divine kingdom. But it is also true that dreamy gazing will not disclose them either. Scholarship may not scale the heights of the unrevealed, and neither assuredly may ignorance. There is nothing to choose between far-seeing Lynceus and a common sailor of the *Argo*, when the object for which they look out together is not yet above the horizon. The latter, at all events, should not regard the absence of superior endowment as an advantage.

In the more high-wrought forms of theopathic mysticism

² *Aurora*, x. §§ 44, 45.

we have seen reason regarded as the deadly enemy of rapture. The surpassing union which takes place in ecstasy is dissolved on the first movement of reflection. Self-consciousness is the lamp whereby the ill-fated Psyche at once discerns and loses the celestial lover, whose visits cease with secrecy and night. But Behmen devoutly employs all the powers of a most active mind to combine, to order, to analyse, to develop, the heavenly data.

Protestant mysticism generally is, like Behmen's, communicative. The mysticism of the Reformation and of the Counter-Reformation afford, in this respect, a striking contrast. That of the Romanists is, for the most part, a veiled thing, not to be profaned by speech. It is an ineffable privilege which description would deprive of its awe. It is commonly a contrivance employed for effect—a flash, and darkness. It is a distinction, in some cases, for services past; an individual preparation, in others, for services to come. The special revelation of the Protestant is a message to some man for his fellow-men. It at least contemplates something practical. It is generally reformatory. The vision of the Romish saint is a private token of favour, or a scar of honour, or a decoration from the court of heaven, like a cross or star.

The illumination of Behmen differs, again, from that of Swedenborg, in that he does not profess to have held communication with spirits, or to have passed into other worlds and states of being. While his doctrine is, in many respects, less subjective than that of Swedenborg, his mode of vision, so entirely internal, is more so.

The three-leaved book, says Behmen, is within me; hence all my teaching. In man are the three gates opening on the three worlds. Behmen's heaven is not wholly above the sky. The subterranean regions cannot contain his hell. The inner

and spiritual sphere underlies everywhere the material and outward.³ As with those hollow balls of carved ivory that come to us from the East, one is to be discerned within the other through the open tracery. The world is like some kinds of fruit—a plum or apple, for instance,—and has its rind-men, its pulp-men, and its core, or kernel-men; yet all with the same faculties,—only the first live merely on the surface of things; the last perceive how the outer form is determined by the central life within. Man intersects the spiritual, sidereal, and terrestrial worlds, as a line from the centre to the outermost of three concentric circles. Behmen would say that his insight arose from his being aided by Divine Grace to live along the whole line of his nature, with a completeness attained by few. He travels to and fro on his radius. When recipient of celestial truth he is near the centre; when he strives to give utterance and form to such intimations, he approaches the circumference. When asked how he came to know so much about our cosmogony, and about the origin and œconomy of the angelic world, he would answer, ‘Because I have lived in that region of myself which opens out upon those regions. I need not change my place to have entrance into the heavenly sphere. I took no Mahomet’s flight. The highest and the

³ See *Aurora*, cap. xix. §§ 26-45; cap. xxiii. § 86.

After speaking of the revolt of Lucifer as the cause of the present imperfection and admixture of natural evil in the world, by corrupting the influence of the Fountain-Spirits throughout our department of the universe, and of the blind and endangered condition of man consequent thereon, he adds,—‘But thou must not suppose that on this account the heavenly light in the Fountain-Spirits of God is utterly extinct. No; it is but a darkness which we, with our corrupt eyesight, cannot apprehend. But when God removes the darkness

which thus broods above the light, and thine eyes are opened, then thou seest even on the spot where thou sittest, standest, or dost lie in thy room, the lovely face of God, and all the gates that open upon heaven. Thou needest not first lift thine eyes upwards to heaven, for it is written, ‘The word is near thee, even on thy lips and in thine heart;’ Deut. xxx. 14; Rom. x. 8. So near thee, indeed, is God, that the birth of the Holy Trinity takes place in thine heart also, and there all three persons are born,—Father. Son and Holy Ghost.’—*Aurora*, cap. x. §§ 57, 58.

inmost, in the deepest sense, are one."⁴ So it is as though man stood at a spot where three rivers are about to join; as though to drink of the water of each was to give him knowledge of the kind of country through which each had passed; how one ran embrowned out of marshy lakes—through wealthy plains—under the bridges of cities,—washing away the refuse of manufactures; while the second came ruddy from rocks, red with their iron rust,—came carrying white blossoms and silver-grey willow leaves from glens far up the country, deepfolded in hanging woods; and the water of the third, ice-cold and hyaline, presented to the soul, as it touched the lips, visions of the glacier-portcullis from under whose icicles it leaped at first, and of those unsullied tracts of heavenward snow which fed its childhood at the bidding of the sun, and watched it from the heights of eternal silence.

The *Aurora* was the firstfruit of the illumination thus

⁴ 'The spirit of man,' says Behmen, 'contains a spark from the power and light of God.' The Holy Ghost is 'creaturely' within it when renewed, and it can therefore search into the depths of God and nature, as a child in its father's house. In God, past, present, and future; breadth, depth, and height; far and near, are apprehended as one, and the holy soul of man sees them in like manner, although (in the present imperfect state) but partially. For the devil sometimes succeeds in smothering the seed of inward light.—*Aurora, Vorrede*, §§ 96-105.

According to Behmen, Stephen, when he saw the heavens opened, and Christ at the right hand of God, was not spiritually translated into any distant upper region,—'he had penetrated into the inmost birth—into the heaven which is everywhere.'—*Aurora*, cap. xix. § 48. Similarly, he declares that he had not ascended into heaven,

and seen with the eye of the flesh the creative processes he describes, but that his knowledge comes from the opening within him of the gate to the inner heavenly world, so that the divine sun arose and shone within his heart, giving him infallible inward certainty concerning everything he announces. If an angel from heaven had told him such things, he must have doubted. It might have been Satan in a garb of light: it would have been an external testimony: it would have been beyond his comprehension; but this light and impulse from within precludes all doubt. The holy Soul is one spirit with God, though still a creature; sees as the angels see, and far more, since they discern only heavenly things, but man has experience both of heaven and hell, standing as he does midway between the two.—*Aurora*, cap. xi. §§ 68-72, and cap. xii. § 117. Comp. also 7p. xxv. §§ 46-48.

realized. He composed it, he reminds us, for himself alone, to give him a hold against any refluxing doubt that might threaten to sweep him back into the waves. It is the worst written of all his treatises. With respect to it, the answer of Shakspeare's Roman shoemaker gives to Marullus may be adopted by our Teuton—'Truly, sir, in respect of a fine workman, I am but, as you would say, a cobbler.' Yet this botched performance best renders us the genuine Behmen, as he was when first the afflatus came, before greater leisure for reading and study, and intercourse with men of station or scholarship had given him culture. This *Aurora*, then, over which Karl von Endern pored in his simplicity till he rose therefrom with a bewildered admiration and a sense of baffled amazement, physically expressed by a feverish headache,—over whose pages Gregory Richter galloped with scornful hoof, striking out pishes and pshaws and bahs over its flinty ruggedness,—this *Aurora*—a dawn opening for Behmen with such threatening weather within and without—what kind of book does it appear to us?

It is at first with curiosity, then with impatience, and ere long with the irritation of inevitable fatigue, that we read those wordy pages Behmen wrote with such a furious impetus. How wide the distance between him and his readers now! Behold him early in his study, with bolted door. The boy must see to the shop to-day; no sublunary cares of awl and leather, customers and groschen, must check the rushing flood of thought. The sunshine streams in—emblem, to his 'high-raised phantasy,' of a more glorious light. As he writes, the thin cheeks are flushed, the grey eye kindles, the whole frame is damp and trembling with excitement. Sheet after sheet is covered. The headlong pen, too precipitate for caligraphy, for punctuation, for spelling, for syntax, dashes on. The lines which darken down the waiting page are, to the writer, furrows

into which heaven is raining a driven shower of celestial seed. On the chapters thus fiercely written the eye of the modern student rests, cool and critical, wearily scanning paragraphs digressive as Juliet's nurse, and protesting with contracted eyebrow, that this easy writing is abominably hard to read. We survey this monument of an extinct enthusiasm,—this structure, many-chambered, intricate, covering so broad a space,—as does the traveller the remains of the Pompeian baths;—there are the cells and channels of the hypocaust, dusty and open to the day, the fires long since gone out, and all that made the busy echoing halls and winding passages so full of life—the laughter, the quarrel, the chatter of the vestibule, imagination must supply, while Signor Inglese, beneath a large umbrella and a straw hat, doth gaze and muse, with smarting eyes and liquefying body.

Behmen does not suffer much more in this respect than all minds of his class must suffer. Imagination, with its delicate sympathy, will know how to make allowance for him; but reason will not attempt to rescue him from condign sentence of unreadableness. It is obvious, after all, that the good man's inspiration was not born of the mania Plato describes as 'divine transport;' that it was akin rather to that morbid activity which is but 'human distemper.' It is the prerogative of genius to transmit through the dead page, with a glow that can never become quite cold, some rays of that central heat of heart which burned when the writer held the pen. The power of Behmen does not reach so far. That rapidity which was to him the witness of the Spirit, leaves for us only the common signs of unpardonable haste,—is tediously visible in negligence disorder, repetitions, and diffuseness.

As might be expected, Behmen is often best in those parts of his writings to which he himself would have assigned less value. In many of his letters, in some of his prefaces, and

interspersed throughout all his works, exhortations are to be found which in their pungency and searching force recal the burning admonitions of Richard Baxter. These appeals, summoning to religious simplicity and thoroughness, exposing the treacheries of the heart, encouraging the feeble-minded, awakening the sleeper, would be as eloquent and pathetic as they are earnest and true, did he oftener know where to stop. Such passages, however, are preludes or interludes neighboured by heavy monologue, monotonous and protracted beyond all patience. We descend from those serene uplands, where the air is redolent of the cedars of Lebanon, and the voices we hear recal the sounds of Hebrew prophecy or psalm, to the poor flats of his mortal speculation—muddy, we must say it, in the finest weather, where chalky streams wind their slow length by stunted pollards, over levels of interminable verbiage.

The same ideas incessantly recur, sometimes almost in the same words. Such repetition contributes not a little to the discouragement and perplexity of the reader, even when most pertinaciously bent on exploring these recesses,—as in threading his dim way through the catacombs, the investigator loses count by the resemblance of so many passages to each other, and seems to be returning constantly to the same spot. With all his imagination, Behmen has little power of elucidation, scarcely any original illustration. The analogies suggested to him are seldom apt to his purpose, or such as really throw light on his abstractions. To a mind active in such direction illustrative allusions are like the breed of ponies celebrated in the *Pirate*, that graze wild on the Shetland hills, from among which the islander catches, as he needs, the first that comes to hand, puts on the halter, canters it his journey, and lets it go, never to know it more. But Behmen, when he has laid hold of a similitude, locks the stable door upon it—keeps it for constant

service—and at some times rides the poor beast to death. The obscurity of his writings is increased by his arbitrary chemico-theological terminology, and the hopeless confusion in which his philosophies of mind and matter lie entangled. His pages resemble a room heaped in disorder, with the contents of a library and laboratory together. In this apartment you open a folio divine, and knock over a bottle of nitric acid ;—you go to look after the furnace, and you tumble over a pile of books. You cannot divest yourself of the suspicion that when you have left the place and locked the door behind you, these strange implements will assume an unnatural life, and fantastically change places,—that the books will some of them squeeze themselves into the crucible, and theology will simmer on the fire, and that the portly alembic will distil a sermon on predestination.

The *Aurora* is broken every here and there by headings in capital letters—promising and conspicuous sign-posts, on which are written, ‘MARK!’—‘NOW MARK!’—‘UNDERSTAND THIS ARIGHT!’—‘THE GATE OF THE GREAT MYSTERY!’—‘MARK NOW THE HIDDEN MYSTERY OF GOD!’—‘THE DEEPEST DEPTH!’—and similar delusive advertisements, pointing the wayfarer, alas ! to no satisfactory path of extrication,—places rather of deeper peril,—spots like those in the lowlands of Northern Germany, verdurous and seemingly solid, but concealing beneath their trembling crust depths of unfathomable mire, whence (like fly from treacle-jar) the unwary traveller is happy to emerge, miserably blinded and besmeared, with a hundred-weight of mud weighing down either limb. Often does it seem as though now, surely, a goodly period were at hand, and Behmen were about to say something summary and transparent : the forest opens—a little cleared land is discernible—a solitary homestead or a charcoal-burner’s hut appears to indicate the verge of this interminable Ardennes forest of words

—but only a little further on, the trees shut out the sky again ; it was but an interstice, not the limit ; and the wild underwood and press of trunks embarrass and obscure our course as before. It is some poor relief when Behmen pauses and fetches breath to revile the Devil, and in homely earnest calls him a damned stinking goat, or asks him how he relishes his prospects ; when he stops to anticipate objections and objurgate the objectors, dogmatizing anew with the utmost *naïveté*, and telling them to take care, for they will find him right to a certainty at the last day ; or, finally, when he refreshes himself by a fling at the Papists, quite Lutheran in its heartiness. For in Behmen's mysticism there was nothing craven, effeminate, or sentimental. He would contend to the death for the open Bible. All spiritual servitude was his abhorrence. Very different was the sickly mysticism for a short time in vogue in Germany at a later period of the seventeenth century. Behmen was no friend to what was narrow or corrupt in the Lutheranism of his day. But a Lutheran he remained, and a genuine Protestant. Sickly and servile natures could only sigh over the grand religious battle of those days, and would have made away their birthright—liberty, for that mess of pottage—peace. They began by regarding the strife between tyranny and freedom with unmanly indifference. They ended by exercising for the last time their feeble private judgment, and securing themselves with obsequious haste in the shackles of the infallible Church.

CHAPTER VIII.

Μύστας δὲ νόος
Τά τε καὶ τὰ λέγει,
Βυθὸν ἄρρητον
Ἀμφιχορεύων,
Σὺ τὸ τίκτον ἔφυσ,
Σὺ τὸ τικτόμενον,
Σὺ τὸ φωτίζον,

Σὺ τὸ λαμπρόμενον,
Σὺ τὸ φαινόμενον,
Σὺ τὸ κρυπτόμενον
Ἰδίαις α γαῖς.
Ὑν καὶ πάντα
Ὑν καθ' ἑαυτὸ.
Καὶ διὰ πάντων.¹

SYNESIUS.

WILLOUGHBY'S ESSAY—SIXTH EVENING.

§ 6. *Jacob Behmen.—Sketch and Estimate of his System.*

SO our Behmen, rejoicing in his supernatural light, is prepared to answer more questions than ever the Northern hero, Ganglar, put to the throned phantoms in the palace roofed with golden shields. Let us listen to some of his replies. We have been long in the penumbra—now for the depth of the shadow.

To begin with, Behmen must have an 'immanent,' as distinguished from the revealed Trinity. He attempts to exhibit the *principle* of that threefold mode of the divine existence, concerning which we could have known nothing, apart from Revelation, and which Revelation discloses only in its practical connexion with the salvation of man. His theory of the Trinity is not one whit more unsubstantial than many suggested by modern philosophical divines of high repute. In the Abyss of the divine nature, the Nothing of unrevealed Godhead, Behmen

¹ The initiate mind saith this and saith that, as it circles around the unspeakable Depth. Thou art the bringer-forth, thou too the offspring; thou the illuminer, thou the illuminate;

thou art the manifest, thou art the hidden one,—hid by thy glories. One, and yet all things, one in thyself alone, yet throughout all things!

supposes that there exists Desire—a going forth, on the part of what is called the Father. The object and realization of such tendency is the Son. The bond and result of this reciprocal love is the Holy Spirit.²

Here a marked difference must be noted between Behmen and recent German speculation. With Hegel, for example, humanity is an indispensable link in the Trinitarian process. God depends on man for his self-consciousness and development. The deity of Behmen, on the contrary, is self-sufficing, and the circle of the divine blessedness does not stand indebted to man for its completion.

But does not every inward suppose an outward? As, therefore, there is an Eternal Spirit, so also is there an Eternal Nature. God is not mere being; He is Will. This Will manifests itself in an external universe.

The Eternal Nature, or *Mysterium Magnum*, may be described as the external correlative of the divine Wisdom. In other words, what are Ideas in the divine Wisdom, assume external form, as natural properties, in the Eternal Nature. Suso and Spenser sing the praises of the heavenly Wisdom. Behmen, too, personifies this attribute as the eternal Virgin. But Nature is distinguished from the maiden Wisdom as the prolific Mother of the Universe.

In the Eternal Nature, are seven 'Forms of Life,' or 'Active Principles,' or 'Fountain-Spirits' (*Quellgeister*), or 'Mothers of Existence,'—typified in the seven golden candlesticks of the

² *Von den drei Principien des Gottlichen Wesens*, cap. vii. §§ 22, &c., cap. ix. 30, et *passim*. *Aurora*, cap. ii. § 41; cap. xxiii. 61-82. Compare *Aurora*, cap. xx. §§ 49, &c. *Drei Princip.* cap. vii. 25. *Aurora*, cap. x. § 58. Also cap. iii. throughout. There he describes the way in which every natural object—wood, stone, or plant, contains three principles,—the image, or impress of the divine Trinity; first,

the Power (*Krafft*) whereby it possesses a body proper to itself; secondly, the sap (*Safft*) or heart; thirdly, the peculiar virtue, smell, or taste proceeding from it; this is its *spirit* (§ 47). So, in the soul of man, do Power, and Light, and a Spirit of Understanding—the offspring of both—correspond to the three persons of the Trinity (§ 42.)

Apocalypse, and in the many examples of that significant number. These Forms reciprocally generate and are generated by each other. Each one of them is at once the parent and offspring of all the rest. As King Arthur for his knights, so Behmen has a kind of round table for them, that no one may hold precedence. He compares them to a skeleton globe, or a system of wheels revolving about a common centre. This heart or centre is the Son of God, as the sun is the heart and lord of the seven planets. The antitheses which these various qualities present to each other, in their action and reaction, are harmonized in the Supreme Unity. The opposition and reconciliation of ideal principles manifest the divine fulness,—constitute a play of love and life in the Divine Nature, the blessedness of Godhead. But the simultaneous action of these qualities becomes concrete in the visible universe. On our planet their operation has been corrupted by moral evil, and is therefore accompanied by painful strife; so that, with harsh clangour, the great wheel of life is turned by hostile forces.

The shortest method will be at once to catalogue the mighty Seven—the besiegers of that Thebes, your patience.

I. *The Astringent Quality.*

This first Fountain-Spirit is the principal of all contractive force. It is desire, and draws, producing hardness, solidity, &c. Rocks are hard because this quality is dominant, or *primus* in them, as Behmen phrases it. In organic nature it produces the woody fibre. It predominates in the planet Saturn, in salt, in bone, in wolves.

II. *The Sweet Quality.*

The second is the antagonist of the first,—the principle of expansion and movement. The pliant forms of plants, fluids, quicksilver,—and, among animals, the subtle fox, are examples of its characteristic supremacy.

III. *The Bitter Quality.*

This is the principle generated from the conflict of those two contraries, the first and second. It is manifest in the anguish and strife of being,—in the alterations of the revolving wheel of life. It may become heavenly rapture or hellish torment. Its influence is dominant in sulphur, in the planet Mars, in war, in dogs. It produces red colours, and reigns in choleric temperaments.

IV. *The Quality of Fire.*

The first three qualities belong more especially to the kingdom of the Father—of wrath, necessity, death. The last three to the kingdom of the Son—of love, freedom, life. The fourth quality is the intermediate or transition point between the two members of this antithesis of evolution. In the quality of Fire, light and darkness meet ; it is the root of the soul of man ; the source, on either side, of heaven and hell, between which our nature stands. In this lower material world, it is manifest in the principle of growth. In the sidereal world, its planet is the central sun. It produces yellow colours ; reigns, among metals, in gold,—among animals, in the lion.

V. *The Quality of Love.*

This principle, in its higher operations, is the source of wisdom and glory. It predominates in all sweet things, in birds, in the intercourse of the sexes ; and its star is Venus. Behmen, in some places, assigns this quality especially to the gracious Son.

VI. *The Quality of Sound.*

Hence, in heaven, the songs of the angels, the harmony of the spheres ; in man, the five senses, understanding, and the gift of speech. This quality is *primus* in jovial temperaments, and produces blue colours.

VII. *The Quality of Corporeity, or Essential Substance.*

This is the quality by which all the rest come to manifestation. It falls, with the preceding, more peculiarly under the province of the Holy Spirit, as the searching and formative principle. It is the source in the heavenly world of the beautiful forms of Paradise, as the preceding is of its sweet sounds. On earth it is the plastic power ruling matter—the operative spirit of nature.³

It is curious to observe how Behmen's theory takes hold of Chemistry with one hand, and Theology with the other. Paracelsus pronounced all matter composed of salt, mercury, and sulphur. Behmen adds, 'It is even so, considering salt as the representative of the astringent or attractive principle,—mercury, of the fluent or separative,—and sulphur, of nature's pain in the resultant process of production.' Again, the Father is the dark or fiery principle ; the Son, the principle of light or grace ; and the Holy Ghost, the creative, formative, preserving principle—the outbirth or realization of the two former. There are no materials so incongruous that a dexterous use of imaginative or superficial analogies cannot combine them. In this way, a medley of terms from the nomenclature of every science may be catalogued and bracketed in symmetrical groups of twos and threes. Behmen was too much in earnest, however, to carry such artificial method very far. He was more concerned about thought than orderly form. He could not postulate a fact to fill a gap in a synopsis. Though he mingles in much confusion the sciences of mind and matter, he does not confound their subjects, and regard them as different states of one substance. He would not affirm, with Schelling, that matter was mind dormant ; and mind, matter realized and self-conscious.

³ See Note on p. 120.

We have seen that Behmen assigns the first three principles to the dark kingdom of the Father. When he describes that as a realm of wrath and darkness, he speaks chiefly from the human point of view. God is love. The Father regarded as the wrath-principle, cannot strictly be called God. But the very principle which makes love what it is, becomes, in respect to sin, so much wrath.

Yet, independently of man, and of such wrath as he may know, God would still have manifested himself in contraries. The divine One, the unmanifested Subject, seeking an object—desiring, as it were, to find himself, becomes what, for lack of better terms, Behmen has to call a craving darkness, or burning sense of want. Not that Deity suffers pain; but a certain passion must form the base of action. Realizing that object, the darkness becomes light. That light—the Son—had not been, but for the darkness—the Father. Then from the two, which are one, arise, in the Holy Spirit, the archetypal Forms of the universe. Thus, from the depth of the divine nature itself spring these opposites, Power and Grace, Wrath and Love, Darkness and Light; and thence, by a combination of forces, the manifestation of God in the quickened, changeful universe. But for such antithesis God had remained unrevealed. Without so much of antagonism as is essential to action, the Divine Being had not realized the glory of his nature.

At the same time, Behmen carefully excludes the notion of modern pantheism, that the Divine Idea develops itself by a process, and grows as the world grows.⁴ ‘I have to relate in succession,’ he would say, ‘what takes place simultaneously in God,—to describe separately what is one in Him. He needs no method, no medium. The Eternal Nature is not his instrument for creating the visible universe. Thought and

⁴ See Note on p. 121.

realization, with God, take place together, and are in Him identical.' So, in describing a landscape, we have to relate severally the sounds and appearances of birds and clouds, hills and waters. But to him who is on the spot, the birds sing, the waters shine, the clouds fly, the trees bow on the hill, and the corn waves along the valley, at one and the same time. His senses are the focus of the whole: he sits in the centre. But description must travel the circumference.

We now arrive once more at Behmen's 'Yea and Nay'—that theory of antithesis before noticed: his explanation of the origin of Evil. These Contraries are his trade-winds, whereby he voyages to and fro, and traverses with such facility the whole system of things. He teaches that the Divine Unity, in its manifestation or self-realization, parts into two principles, variously called Light and Darkness, Joy and Sorrow, Fire and Light, Wrath and Love, Good and Evil. Without what is termed the Darkness and the Fire, there would be no Love and Light. Evil is necessary to manifest Good. Not that anything is created by God for evil. In everything is both good and evil: the predominance decides its use and destiny. What is so much pain and evil in hell, is, in heaven, so much joy and goodness. The bitter fountain and the sweet flow originally from one divine Source. The angels and the devils are both in God, of whom, and in whom, all live and move. But from their divine basis, or root, the former draw joy and glory, the latter shame and woe. The point of collision is the gate of anguish and of bliss.

Thus Behmen, from far away, echoes Heraclitus, and declares Strife the father of all things. What were Virtue, he would ask, without temptation? In life's warfare lies its greatness. Our full wealth of being is only realized by a struggle for very life. Not till the height of the conflict between Siegfried and the dragon—not till the mountain is all flames and earthquake

with that fearful fight, do the dwarfs bring out their hoard, and untold riches glitter round the victor.

Behmen was by no means the first to devise a hypothesis so plausible. We meet with it in quarters widely remote—in the pantheism of Jelaleddin Rumi and of John Scotus Erigena. But nowhere does it occupy so central a place, undergo such full development, receive such copious illustration, as in the theosophy of the Görlitz shoemaker.

Like most of those attempts to explain the inexplicable which have proved more than usually attractive, this theory has its truth and its falsehood. It is true that the harmonious development of life is neither more nor less than a successive reconciliation of contraries. The persistent quality, representing our individuality and what is due to the particular self, must not exist alone. The diffusive quality, or fluent, having regard only to others, must not exist alone. The extreme of either defeats itself. Each is necessary to, or, as Behmen would say, lies in the other. The two factors are reconciled, and consummated in a higher unity when the command is obeyed—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ Towards this standard all moral development must tend. Pairs of principles, like the Personal and the Relative, the Ideal and the Actual, &c.—at once twin and rival—where each is the complement of the other, are very numerous. They are designed for union, as heat and cold combine to produce a temperate or habitable clime. Had Behmen confined his theory of contraries within such limits, we might have questioned his expressions;—we must, I think, have admitted his principle.

But when he takes good and evil as the members of such an antithesis, he is deceived by an apparent likeness. It would be a strange thing should any one declare courage and meekness, lowliness and aspiration, the work of God and the work of man, incapable of harmony. It is still more strange to hear any man

pronounce any harmony possible between good and evil, sin and holiness. The former set of terms belong to one family, the latter are reciprocally destructive, totally incompatible. Here lies Behmen's fallacy.

To regard goodness as a quality which would remain inert and apathetic were it not endowed with individuality and consistence by evil, and goaded to activity by temptation, is altogether to mistake its nature. An adequate conception of Virtue must require that it be benignly active within its allotted range.

The popular saying that a man should have enough of the devil in him to keep the devil from him, expresses Behmen's doctrine. But the proverb has truth only as it means that of two evils we should choose the less : supposing imperfection inevitable, better too much self-will than too much pliability. It is true that greatness of soul is never so highly developed or so grandly manifest as amid surrounding evils. But it is not true that the good is intrinsically dependent on the evil for its very being as goodness. No one will maintain that He in whom there was no sin lacked individuality and character, or that he was indebted to the hostility of scribes and Pharisees for his glorious perfectness. Indeed, such a position would subvert all our notions of right and wrong ; for Evil—the awakener of dormant virtue—would be the great benefactor of the universe. Sin would be the angel troubling that stagnant Bethesda—mere goodness, and educing hidden powers of blessing.

Moreover, we must not argue from the present to the original condition of man. Nor can any one reasonably rank among the causes by which he professes to account for sin, that which God has seen fit to do in order to obviate its consequences. To say, 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,' is not to explain the origin of evil.

Once more, if evil be a necessary factor in our development, that world from which all evil will be banished cannot be an object of desire. Heaven seems to grow wan and insipid. To exhort us to root out the evil of our nature is to enjoin a kind of suicide. It is to bid us annihilate the animating, active seed of moral progress. So death is life, and life death. Again, if man's nature be progressive and immortal, his immortality must be one of unending conflict. Modern Pantheism escapes this conclusion by annihilating personality, and by resolving the individual into the All. A poor solution, surely—*dis*-solution. To Behmen, no consequence could have been more repugnant. No man could hold more strongly than did he, the doctrine of a future and eternal state, determined by the deeds done in the body. Yet such a cessation of personality might be logically urged from the theory which seemed to him triumphantly to remove so much perplexity.⁵

A tale of chivalry relates how fair Astrid wandered in the moonlight, seeking flowers for the wreath she was twining, but always, when the last had just been woven in, the garland would drop asunder in her hands, and she must begin again her sad endeavour, ever renewed and ever vain. Human speculation resembles that ghostly maiden. Each fresh attempt has all but completed the circuit of our logic. But one link remains, and in the insertion of that the whole fabric falls to pieces. It is a habit with fevered Reason to dream that she has solved the great mystery of life. And when Reason does so dream, her wild-eyed sister, Imagination, is sober and self-distrustful in comparison.

Neither the theist nor the pantheist can claim Behmen as exclusively his own. He would perhaps have reckoned their dispute among those which he could reconcile. Certain it is,

⁵ Here I am much indebted to the masterly discussion of the theory in question, contained in Müller's *Lehre von der Sünde*, Buch ii. cap. 4.

that he holds, in combination, the doctrine which teaches a God *within* the world, and the doctrine which proclaims a God *above* it.

Says the pantheist, 'Do you believe in a God who is the heart and life of the universe, the soul of that vast body, the world?' Behmen answers, 'Yes; but I do not believe in a God who is a mere vital force—a God of necessary process—a God lost in the matter He has evolved.'

Says the theist, 'Do you believe in a God who has Personality and Character; who creates of self-conscious free-will; who rules, as He pleases, the work of his hands?' Behmen answers, 'Yes; but I do not relegate my Deity beyond the skies. I believe that He is the life of all creatures, all substance; that He dwelleth in me; that I am in His heaven, if I love Him, wherever I go; that the universe is born out of Him and lives in Him.'

Like Erigena, Behmen supposed that the 'Nothing,' out of which God made all things, was his own unrevealed abstract nature, called, more properly, Non-being.

And, now, to Behmen's version of the story of our world. He tells us how God created three circles, or kingdoms of spirits, corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity. To each a monarch and seven princes were assigned, corresponding to the seven Qualities or Fountain-Spirits. One of these angelic sovereigns, Lucifer, fell, through pride, and all his kingdom with him. Straightway, as the inevitable consequence of sin, the operation of all the seven Qualities throughout his dominion became perverted and corrupt. The Fiery principle, instead of being the root of heavenly glory, became a principle of wrath and torment. The Astringent quality, instead of ministering due stability, or coherence, became hard and stubborn; the Sweet, foul and putrescent; the Bitter, fierce and raging. So with all the rest. Now, it so happened that the seventh Quality

of Lucifer's realm coincided, in space, with this world of ours. This earth, therefore,—once a province of the heavenly world,—was broken up into a chaos of wrath and darkness, roaring with the hubbub of embattled elements. Before man was created, nature had fallen. The creative word of God brought order into the ruins of this devastated kingdom. Out of the chaos He separated sun and planets, earth and elements.⁶

In the Black Forest lies a lake, bordered deep with lilies. As the traveller gazes on that white waving margin of the dark waters, he is told that those lilies, on the last moonlighted midnight, assumed their spirit-forms,—were white-robed maidens, dancing on the mere ; till, at a warning voice, they resumed, ere daybreak, the shape of flowers. Similarly, on Behmen's strange theory, all our natural has been previously spiritual beauty. The material of this world was, erewhile, the fine substance of an angel realm. All our fair scenes are as much below the higher forms of celestial fairness, as are the material flowers of lower rank in loveliness than the phantom dancers of that haunted lake. The 'Heavenly Materiality,' or 'Glassy Sea,' of the angelic kingdom, was a marvellous mirror of perfect shapes and colours, of sounds and virtues. Therein arose, in endless variety, the ideal Forms of heaven—jubilant manifestations of the divine fulness, gladdening the spirits of the praising angels with a blessedness ever new. All the growth and productive effort of our earth is an endeavour to bring forth as then it brought forth. Every property of nature, quickened from its fall by the divine command—'Be fruitful and multiply,' strives to produce in time as it did in eternity.⁷ But for that fall, this

⁶ *Aurora*, cap. ix. § 42 ; cap. xviii. § 10-15 ; cap. xxiii. §§ 92, &c. The remarks in the text, concerning Behmen's position as between theism and pantheism, are only true if the word theism be there understood as equivalent to deism. For theism, understanding by it belief in a personal

deity, does not remove God from the universe. Theism ought to represent the true mean between the deism which relegates a divine Mechanician far from the work of his hands, and the pantheism which submerges him beneath it.

⁷ *Aurora*, cap. iv. §§ 10, 11. Comp. § 15, and also cap. xxi. § 37.

earth had never held perilous sands nor cruel rocks ; never put forth the poisonous herb, nor bred the ravenous beast ; and never would earthquake, pestilence, or tempest, the deadly outbreaks of water or of fire, have accompanied the warfare of disordered elements. The final fires will redeem nature, purging away the dross, and closing the long strife of time.

Adam was created to be the restoring angel of this world. His nature was twofold. Within, he had an angelic soul and body, derived from the powers of heaven. Without, he had a life and body derived from the powers of earth. The former was given him that he might be separate from, and superior to the world. He was endowed with the latter, that he might be connected with, and operative in the world. His external nature sheltered his inner from all acquaintance with the properties of our corrupted earth. His love and his obedience surrounded him with a perpetual paradise of his own. He could not feel the fierceness of fire, the rigour of cold ; he was inaccessible to want or pain. He was designed to be the father of a like angelic-human race, who should occupy and reclaim the earth for God,—keeping down the ever-emerging Curse, and educating and multiplying the Blessing which God had implanted

But the will of Adam gradually declined from the inward paradisiacal life towards the life of this world. He commenced his downward course by desiring to know the good and evil of the world about him. Then Eve was fashioned out of him, and the distinction of sex introduced. This was a remedial interposition to check his descent. It was deemed better that he should love the feminine part of his own nature rather than the external world.⁸ Each step of decline was mercifully met by some new aid on the part of God, but all in vain. He ate of the earthly tree, and the angelic life within him became extinct.

Behmen contends stoutly that no arbitrary trial or penalty

⁸ *Aurora*, cap. v. § 4 ; cap. xvii. § 16.

was imposed on Adam. No divine wrath visited his sin on his descendants. His liability to suffering and death was the natural consequence (according to the divine order) of his breaking away from God, and falling from the angel to the animal life. It is characteristic of Behmen's theology to resolve acts of judgment, or of sovereign intervention, as much as possible, into the operation of law. Thus, he will not believe that God inflicts suffering on lost souls or devils. Their own dark and furious passions are their chain and flame. He shares this tendency in common with most of the Protestant mystics. And I am by no means prepared to say that our mystics are altogether wrong on this matter.

No sooner had man fallen, than the mercy of God implanted in him the seed of redemption. He lodged in the depths of our nature a hidden gift of the Spirit, the inner light, the internal 'serpent-bruise,' the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All our beginnings of desire towards God and heaven are the working of this indwelling seed of life. Thus, salvation is wholly of grace. At the same time, it rests with us whether we will realize or smother the nascent blessing. Man is the arbiter of his own destiny, and voluntarily develops, from the depths of his nature, his heaven or his hell.

Lessons of self-abandonment, similar to those of the *Theologia Germanica*, are reiterated by Jacob Behmen. We are never to forget the 'Nothingness' of man, the 'All' of God. He pronounces means and ordinances good only as they lead us directly to God,—as they prepare us to receive the divine operation. With Behmen, as with the mystics of the fourteenth century, redemption is our deliverance from the restless isolation of Self, or Ownhood, and our return to union with God. It is a new birth, a divine life, derived from Christ, the true vine.⁹

¹ *Aurora*. § 27; cap. xiv. § 104; cap. x. §§ 42, 65; xix. § 50.

But to this idea the theosophists add another. They have a physical as well as a spiritual regeneration, and believe in the revival, within the regenerate, of a certain internal or angelic body. The Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation gave much encouragement to such fancies. According to Weigel, Christ had a twofold body—one truly human; another, called the heavenly, a procession from the divine nature. Furthermore, theosophy extends the influence of redemption to external nature. In the latter-day, 'the time of the Lilies,' all men will be the true servants of Christ, our race will have recovered its lost lordship over nature, and the Philosopher's Stone will be discovered. That is, man will be able to extract from every substance its hidden perfectness and power.

The strongly subjective bent of Behmen's mind has its good as well as its evil. He never long loses sight of his great aim—the awakening and sustenance of the inward life. That life was imperilled by formalism, by fatalism, by dogmatical disputes, by the greedy superstition of the gold-seeker. So Behmen warns men incessantly, that no assent to orthodox propositions can save them.¹⁰ He argues against the Hyper-Calvinist, and against what he regarded as the Antinomian consequence of the doctrine of 'imputed righteousness.'¹¹ He was a man of peace, —little disposed to add one more to so many controversies; seldom entering the lists unless challenged.¹² He justly condemned as profitless the Millenarian speculations in which some about him were entangled.¹³ He had no sympathy with those who endeavoured to make ancient Jewish prophecy the fortune-teller of the present day. He declared that the true Philosopher's

¹⁰ For example, in the *Drei Principien*, cap. xxvi. §§ 13-34, and in the *Aurora*, cap. xii. § 65.

¹¹ See Note on p. 121.

¹² *Theos. Sendbr.* 46, §§ 51-54. See also Note on page 122.

¹³ Behmen supposed the latter day

not far distant (*Aurora*, iv. 2), but his remarks on the vanity of eschatological speculations generally might be read with advantage by some of our modern interpreters of prophecy. See the letters to Paul Kaym, *Theos. Send.* viii. and xi.

Stone, to be coveted by all, was 'the new life in Christ Jesus.'¹⁴ Only by victory over Self could any win victory over nature. To the selfish and the godless no secrets would be revealed. Such men were continually within reach of wonders they might not grasp. So the sinful Sir Launcelot slept by the ruined chapel, and had neither grace nor power to awake, though before him stood the holy vessel of the Sangreall on its table of silver. The treatise on the *Three Principles* abounds in counsels and exhortation designed to promote practical holiness. The *Buchlein von der heiligen Gebet* is a collection of prayers for the private use of 'awakened and desirous souls,' somewhat after the manner of those in Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*.

When Behmen finds that Scripture contradicts his scheme, on some minor point, he will frequently, instead of resorting to a forced allegorical interpretation, break away without disguise from the authority of its text. Thus, he says more than once, concerning passages in the Mosaic account of the creation, 'It is evident that the dear man Moses did not write this, for it is contrary to,' &c., &c.¹⁵

Such, then, is the track of Behmen's journeying across the speculative wilderness, following the fiery pillar of an imaginary illumination—a pillar, be it observed, much like that column of glory which, as we stand upon the sea-shore, descends to us from the setting sun,—a luminous line which moves as we move, and which, whatever point we occupy, glows from the ripples at our feet up to the fiery horizon beneath which day is sinking. Behmen's work was done chiefly among the educated. Had his mission been to the lower orders, we should probably have heard of him as the founder of a sect. His object was, however, at once to awaken the life and expound the philosophy, of religion, within the Lutheran Church. He called attention

¹⁴ *Theos. Sendbr.* x. § 20. See also Note on page 123.

¹⁵ *Aurora*, cap. xx. § 1; xxii. 26. See also second Note on page 123.

to aspects of Christian truth which the systematic theology of that day had too much overlooked. The extensive circulation of his books, and the general welcome given to the main positions of his doctrine, show that his teaching supplied a real want in those times. There can be little doubt that one considerable class of minds, repelled by the assumption or the harshness of the current orthodoxy, was attracted once more to religion under the more genial form in which Behmen presented it. Others were shaken from the sleep of formalism by his vehement expostulations. When the Creed had so largely superseded the Word,—when Protestants were more embittered against each other than brave against the common foe, the broader, deeper doctrine of Behmen would offer to many a blessed refuge. For gold and precious stones shine among his wood and stubble. The darker aspect which some theologians had given to the Divine Sovereignty seemed to pass away, as the trembler studied Behmen's reassuring page. Apart from scientific technicalities, and the nomenclature of his system, Behmen's style and spirit were mainly moulded upon Luther's *German Bible*. Any one who will take the trouble to look, not into the *Aurora*, but into the *Book of the Three Principles*, will find, along with much clouded verbosity and a certain crabbed suggestiveness, a racy idiomatic cast of expression, a hearty manliness of tone, indicating very plainly that Behmen had studied man, and the book which manifests man.

Though his voice is, for us, so faint and distant, we feel how near he must have come to the hearts of his time. Through volumes of speculative vapour, glance and glow the warm emotions of the man, in his apostrophes, appeals, and practical digressions. His philosophy is never that of the artificial abstraction-monger, or the pedantic book-worm. He writes of men and for them as though he loved them. Modern idealism expresses itself with a grace to which the half-educated crafts-

man was a total stranger. But its rhetorical adornment is a painted flame compared with Behmen's fire. Unlike the earlier mystics, his theosophy embraces the whole of man. Unlike so much recent speculation, it is wrought out more by the aspiration of the soul than the ambition of the intellect. Amidst the fantastic disorder of his notions, and the strange inequalities of his insight—now so clear and piercing, now so puerile or perverse,—a single purpose stands unquestionable,—he desired to justify the ways of God to men. His life was a waking dream; but never did mystical somnambulist more sincerely intend service to man and praise to God.

NOTE TO PAGE 107.

Behmen derives *Qualität* from *quellen*, or *quellen* (our *well*), and understands by it the characteristic virtue or operation of anything. Thus the seven Qualities are the seven *Fountain-Spirits*—the prolific sources of their several species of influence. *Aurora*, i. § 3. The notion of pain (*qual*) in giving birth enters also into his conception of Quality.

The description of these seven Qualities occupies (amidst many digressions) a considerable portion of the *Aurora*, and is repeated, with additions and varieties of expression, throughout all his larger works. The summary here given is derived principally from the account in the *Aurora*, and the *Tabula Principiorum*, *Wercke*, vol. iv. p. 268. Similar classifications and definitions are contained in the three first chapters of the *Drei Principien*, and with more clearness and precision in the *Mysterium Magnum*, cap. vi. Compare also especially *Aurora*, cap. iv. §§ 8, 9; xiv. §§ 89, &c.; and xiii. 70-78.

These seven Fountain-Spirits, or Mothers of Nature, are a contrivance really novel. Paracelsus bequeathed to Behmen the term *Mysterium Magnum*, applying it to the Chaos whence he supposed light and darkness, heaven and hell, to derive their origin. But Behmen's furniture or fitting-up of the idea is wholly original. Of the early Gnostics he could know nothing, and his Hepharchy of Nature is totally distinct from theirs. Basilides has seven intellectual and moral impersonations,—the first rank of successive emanations of seven, comprised in his mystical Abraxas. Saturninus has seven star-spirits—the lowest emanations in his scheme, and bordering on matter. Ancient Gnosticism devised these agencies to bridge the space between the supreme Spirit and Hyle. But Behmen recognises no such gulph, and requires no such media. With him, the thought becomes at once the act of God. Matter is not a foreign inert substance, on which God works, like a sculptor. The material universe exhibits, incorporate, those very attributes which constitute the divine glory. Nature is not merely of, but out of, God. Did there lie no divineness in it, the Divine Being would (on Behmen's theory) be cut off from contact with it. With the Sephiroth of the Cabbala Behmen may possibly have had acquaintance. But, in the Cabbala, each Sephira is dependent on that immediately above it, as in the hierarchies of Proclus and Dionysius Areopagita.

Behmen's seven equal Qualities, reciprocally producing and produced, are not links in a descending chain,—they are expressions for the collective possibilities of being. Compare with them the seven lower Sephiroth of the Cabbala, called Might, Beauty, Triumph, Glory, Foundation, and Kingdom. Here we have mere arbitrary personifications of the magnificence displayed in creation. Behmen's qualities are arbitrary, it is true. They might have been different in name, in nature, in number, and the fundamental principles of the system still retained. But who could have resisted the obvious advantages of the sacred planetary number, seven? Behmen, however, goes much deeper than the Cabbalists. He does not idly hypostatise visible attributes. His attractive and diffusive Qualities are the results of generalisation. His Fountain-Spirits are the seminal principles of all being. They are, he believes, the vital laws of universal nature. They are Energies operative, through innumerable transformations, in every range of existence,—in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

NOTE TO PAGE 108.

In the following passage, Behmen endeavours to explain himself, and repels the charge of material pantheism.

'I know the sophist will accuse me for saying that the power of God is in the fruits of the earth, and identifies itself with the generative processes of nature. But, harkye, friend, open thine eyes a moment. I ask thee—How hath Paradise existence in this world? . . . Is it in this world or without it? In the power of God, or in the elements? Is the power of God revealed or hidden? . . . Tell me, doth not God live in time also? Is He not all in all? Is it not written, "Am not I He that filleth all things," and "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever?"

'Here I bethink myself. I would stand clear of all blame from your misconception. I say not that Nature is God, far less that the fruits of the earth are He. I say God gives to all life its power—be that power used for good or evil,—gives power to every creature according to its desire. He Himself is all, yet is not in all natures to be called God, but only where there is light, in respect of that (*nach dem Liechte*) wherein He Himself dwells, and shines with power through all his nature. He communicates his power to all his nature and works (*allen seinen Wesen und Wercken*), and everything appropriates that power of his according to its property. One appropriates darkness, another light: the appetite of each demands what is proper to it, and the whole substance is still all of God, whether good or evil. For from Him, and through Him, are all things; and what is not of his love is of his wrath.

'Paradise is still in the world, but man is not in Paradise, unless he be born again of God; in that case he stands therein in his new birth, and not with the Adam of the four elements,' &c., &c.—*De Signatura Rerum*, cap. viii. §§ 45-47.

NOTE TO PAGE 117.

In his practical writings, and especially in his letters, Behmen handles well the great theme of the life of Christ in us. The prayer of salutation in most of his letters is—'The open fountain in the heart of Christ Jesus refresh and illumine us ever.'

Hear him, on this matter, in a letter to N. N., dated 1623:—

'That man is no Christian who doth merely comfort himself with the suffering, death, and satisfaction of Christ, and doth impute it to himself as a gift of favour, remaining still himself a wild beast, and unregenerate. . . . I say, therefore, that no show of grace imputed from without can make a true Chris-

tian. Sin is not forgiven him by the speaking of a word once for all from without, as a lord of this world may give a murderer his life by an outward act of favour. No, this availeth nothing with God.

'There is no grace whereby we can come to adoption, save simply in the blood and death of Christ. For Him alone hath God appointed to be a throne of grace in His own love, which He hath set in Him, in the sweet name Jesus (from Jehovah). He is the only sacrifice God accepteth to reconcile His anger.

'But if this said sacrifice is to avail for me, it must be wrought *in* me. The Father must communicate or beget His Son in my desire-of-faith (*Glaubensbegierde*), so that my faith's hunger may apprehend Him in His word of promise. Then I put Him on, in His entire process of justification, in my inward ground ; and straightway there begins in me the killing of the wrath of the devil, death, and hell, from the inward power of Christ's death.

'For I can do nothing ; I am dead to myself ; but Christ worketh in me when He ariseth within. So am I inwardly dead, as to my true man ; and He is my life ; the life I live, I live in Him, and not in mine-hood (*Meinheit*), for grace slays my will and establisheth itself lord in place of my self-hood (*Ichheit*), so that I am an instrument of God wherewith He doth what He will.

'Henceforth I live in two kingdoms ;—with my outward mortal man, in the vanity of time, wherein the yoke of sin yet liveth, which Christ taketh on Himself in the inward kingdom of the divine world, and helpeth my soul to bear it. . . . The Holy Scripture everywhere testifieth that we are justified from sin, not by meritorious works of ours, but through the blood and death of Christ. Many teach this, but few of them rightly understand it.'

The other kingdom which, in his haste, Behmen forgot to specify, is the inward world of spiritual and eternal life, which he calls Paradise.—*Theosophische Sendbriefe*, xlv. §§ 7, &c. He inveighs frequently against an antinomian Calvinism. But if any one will compare this letter with Calvin's *Institutes* III. i. and III. ii. 24, he will find that, on the doctrine of union with Christ, Calvin and Behmen, in spite of all their differences, hold language precisely similar.

NOTE TO PAGE 117.

Behmen was well entitled to teach that lesson of tolerance which his age had so forgotten. In one of his letters he says, 'I judge no man ; that anathematizing one of another is an empty prating. The Spirit of God Himself judgeth all things. If He be in us, why need we trouble ourselves about such idle chatter? On the contrary, I rejoice much rather in the gifts of my brethren, and if any of them have received another gift to utter than have I, why should I therefore condemn them? Doth one herb, or flower, or tree, say to another, Thou art sour and dark ; I cannot stand in thy neighbourhood? Have they not all one common Mother, whence they grow? Even so do all souls, all men, proceed from One. Why boast we of ourselves as the children of God, if we are no wiser than the flowers and herbs of the field,' &c.—*Theos. Sendbr.* 12, §§ 35, 36. Again, in the same letter (§ 61), 'Doth not a bee gather honey out of many flowers ; and though some flowers be far better than others, what cares the bee for that? She takes what serves her purpose. Should she leave her sting in the flower, if its juices are not to her taste, as man doth in his disdainfulness? Men strive about the husk, but the noble life-juice they forsake.'

Exhortations to try the spirits, and warnings like those adverted to, not lightly to take whatever fancies may enter the brain, for special revelation, are given in *Theos. Send.* xi. § 64. The test he gives for decision between a true and a false claim to revelation, is the sincerity of desire for the divine—not

self-glory; a genuine charity towards man; a true hunger, 'not after bread, but God.'—Compare *Aurora*, cap. xix. § 77.

NOTE TO PAGE 118.

Carriere, in an excellent summary of Behmen's doctrine, is inclined to idealize his expressions on this point. He would regard Behmen's language concerning the fall and restitution of nature as symbolical, and understand him only in a subjective sense. But such, I feel persuaded, was not Behmen's meaning. The idea that man, himself disordered, sees nature and the world as out of joint,—that the restoration of light within him will glorify the universe without, is comparatively modern. The original design of man, in Behmen's system, requires a restitution in which man shall be once more the angelic lord of life,—the summoner and monarch of all its potencies. Carriere has pointed out, with just discrimination, the distinction between Behmen's position and that of German pantheism in our times. But on some points he seems to me to view him too much with the eyes of the nineteenth century, and his judgment is, on the whole, too favourable. See his *Phil. Weltanschauung der Reformationzeit*, chap. xi.

The *De Signatura Rerum* abounds in examples of that curious admixture of chemical or astrological processes and phenomena with the facts of the gospel narrative, to which allusion has been made. The following specimen may suffice :—

'Adam had brought his will into the poison of the external Mercury. So, then, must Christ, as Love, yield up his will also in the venomous Mercury. Adam ate of the evil tree; Christ must eat of the wrath of God; and as it came to pass inwardly in the spirit, so must it also outwardly in the flesh. And even thus is it in the philosophic work. Mercury, in the philosophic work, signifieth the Pharisees, who cannot endure the dear child. When he sees it, it gives him trembling and anguish. Thus trembles Venus also, before the poison of the wrathful Mercury: they are, one with the other, as though a sweat went from them, as the Artista will see. Mars saith, 'I am the fire-heart in the body: Saturn is my might, and Mercury is my life: I will not endure Love. I will swallow it up in my wrath.' He signifies the Devil, in the wrath of God; and because he cannot accomplish his purpose, he awakens Saturn, as the Impression, who signifies the secular government, and therewith seeks to seize Venus, but cannot succeed; for she is to him a deadly poison. Mercury can still less bear the prospect of losing his dominion,—as the high priests thought Christ would take away their dominion, because He said He was the Son of God. So Mercury is greatly troubled about the child of Venus,' &c., &c.—*De Signatura Rerum*, cap. xi. §§ 18-22.

NOTE TO PAGE 118.

A word or two should find place here concerning the fate of Behmen's doctrine. His friends, Balthasar Walther and Abraham von Franckenberg, were indefatigably faithful to his memory. The son of the very Richter who had so persecuted him, became their fellow-labourer in the dissemination of his writings. Throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century, Germans, Swiss, Hollanders, Englishmen, were busy with translations, commentaries, or original works, in exposition and development of his philosophy. Gichtel published the first complete edition of his writings in 1682, and afterwards went off on his own account into one of the craziest phases of mysticism. Orthodox Lutheranism long continued to assail the doctrine, as it had assailed the man. But the genial piety of Spener, and the large charity of Arnold—that generous advocate of ecclesiastical outcasts—did justice to the devout earnestness of the

theosophist. In France, St. Martin became at once a translator and a disciple. His best representative in England is William Law. That nonjuring clergyman was elevated and liberalised by his intercourse with the mind of the German mystic, and well did he repay the debt. Law may be said to have introduced Behmen to the English public, both by his services as a translator, and by original writings in advocacy of his leading principles. As might be expected, the educated and more practical Englishman frequently expresses the thoughts of the Teuton with much more force and clearness than their originator could command. Several other Englishmen, then and subsequently, speculated in the same track. But they met with small encouragement, and their names are all but forgotten. Here and there some of their books are to be found among literary curiosities, whose rarity is their only value. If any would make acquaintance with Behmen's theology, unvexed by the difficulties of his language or the complexity in which he involves his system, let them read Law. The practical aspect of Behmen's doctrines concerning the fall and redemption are well exhibited in his lucid and searching treatise entitled *The Spirit of Prayer*; or, *The Soul rising out of the Vanity of Time into the Riches of Eternity*.

In Germany Behmen became the great mystagogue of the Romantic school. Novalis and Tieck are ardent in their admiration; but they are cold to Frederick Schlegel. This unconscious caricature of Romanticism (always in some frantic extreme or other) places Behmen above Luther and beside Dante. A plain translation of the Bible, like that of Luther, he could scarcely account a benefit. But a symbolical interpretation, like that of Behmen, was a Promethean gift. Christian art was defective, he thought, because it wanted a mythology. In Behmen's theosophy he saw that want supplied. Alas, that Thorwaldsen did not execute a statue of the Astringent Quality—that Cornelius did not paint the Fiery—that Tieck has never sung the legend of the *Mysterium Magnum*—and that a Gallery of the Seven Mothers should be still the desideratum of Europe! Hegel condescends to throw to Behmen some words of patronising praise, as a distant harbinger of his own philosophical Messiahship. Carriere declares that Schelling borrowed many choice morsels from his terminology without acknowledgment. Franz Baader published a course of lectures on Behmen—revived and adapted him to modern thought, and developed a theosophy, among the most conspicuous of recent times, altogether upon Behmen's model. Baader assures us that had Schelling thought less of Spinoza and more deeply studied Behmen, his philosophy would have been far more rich in valuable result than we now find it. Carriere, pp. 721-725.—Hegel's *Encyclopædie, Vorr. z. zweiten Aufl.* p. 22. Hoffman's *Franz Baader im Verhältnisse zu Spinoza, &c.* p. 23.

The judgment of Henry More concerning Behmen is discriminating and impartial. 'But as for Jacob Behmen I do not see but that he holds firm the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and that his mind was devoutly united to the Head of the Church, the crucified Jesus, to whom he breathed out this short ejaculation with much fervency of spirit upon his death-bed,—Thou crucified Lord Jesus, have mercy on me, and take me into thy kingdom. . . .

'But the case seems to me to stand thus:—There being two main ways whereby our mind is won off to assent to things: viz., the guidance of reason, or the strength and vigour of fancy; and according to the complexion or constitution of the body, we being led by this faculty rather than by that, suppose, by the strength or fulness of fancy rather than the closeness of reason (neither of which faculties are so sure guides that we never miscarry under their conduct; insomuch that all men, even the very best of them that light upon truth, are to be deemed rather fortunate than wise), Jacob Behmen, I conceive, is to be reckoned in the number of those whose imaginative faculty has the pre-eminence

above the rational ; and though he was an holy and good man, his natural complexion, notwithstanding, was not destroyed, but retained its property still ; and therefore his imagination being very busy about divine things, he could not without a miracle fail of becoming an enthusiast, and of receiving divine truths upon the account of the strength and vigour of his fancy : which being so well qualified with holiness and sanctity, proved not unsuccessful in sundry apprehensions, but in others it fared with him after the manner of men, the sagacity of his imagination failing him, as well as the anxiety of reason does others of like integrity with himself.

‘Which things I think very worthy of noting, that no man’s writings may be a snare to any one’s mind ; that none may be puzzled in making that true which of itself is certainly false ; nor yet condemn the hearty and powerful exhortations of a zealous soul to the indispensable duties of a Christian, by any supposed deviations from the truth in speculations that are not so material nor indispensable. Nay, though something should fall from him in an enthusiastic hurricane that seems neither suitable to what he writes elsewhere, nor to some grand theory that all men in their wits hitherto have allowed for truth, yet it were to be imputed rather to that pardonable disease that his natural complexion is obnoxious to, than to any diabolical design in the writer ; which rash and unchristian reproach is as far from the truth, if not further, as I conceive, than the credulity of those that think him in everything infallibly inspired.’—*Mastix, his Letter to a private Friend*, appended to the *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, &c., p. 294 (1656).

It will be sufficient to enumerate the mere names of several minor mystics, whose fancies are of little moment in the history of mystical doctrine. In the sixteenth century appeared David Joris, a Dutchman, who had almost fatal ecstasies and visions, and wrote and exhorted men, in mystical language, to purity and self-abandonment. Also Postel, a Frenchman, more mad than the former, who believed in a female devotee, named Johanna, as the second Eve, through whom humanity was to be regenerated. Guthmann, Lautensack, and Conrad Sperber, were theosophists who mingled, in hopeless confusion, religious doctrine and alchemic process, physics and scripture, tradition, vision, fancy, fact. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Brunswick was agitated by one Engelbrecht, a sickly hypochondriacal weaver, who imagined himself translated to heaven and hell, and commissioned to expound and preach incessantly. During the latter part of the same century, the madman Kuhlmann roved and raved about Europe, summoning sovereigns to his bar : Conrad Dippel improvised a medley of Paracelsus, Schwenkfeld, and Behmen ; and John George Gichtel, a fanatical Quietist, bathed his soul in imaginary flames, believed himself destined to illumine all mankind, founded the sect of the Angel-Brethren, and seems to have ended in sheer madness. An account of these and other mystics, even less notable, will be found in Arnold’s *Kirchen- und-Ketzergeschichte*, Th. iii.

CHAPTER IX.

O sola, mica, rama lamahi,
Volase, cala, maja, mira, salame,
Viemisa molasola, Rama, Afasala.
Mirahel, Zorabeli, Assaja !

Citation for all Spirits, from the BLACK RAVEN

A STRICT regard for historical accuracy compels me to state that the following conversation took place in the drawing-room, and not in the library. By such an arrangement, that bright feminine presence was secured which, according to Gower, deprived mysticism itself of half its obscurity.

‘Did Jacob Behmen frighten you away?’ asked Willoughby of Mrs. Atherton, somewhat remorsefully. ‘I think Atherton and Gower will bear me out in saying that it was not easy to render the worthy shoemaker entertaining.’

MRS. ATHERTON. Mr. Gower was telling us just before you came in, that he found him, from your account, a much more imaginative personage than he had supposed—quite a poetical philosopher.

GOWER. Behmen holds a poet’s doctrine, surely, when he represents all nature as struggling towards an ideal,—striving to bring forth now, as it once did—ere Lucifer had fallen,—longing and labouring, in fellowship with our human aspiration.

WILLOUGHBY. Such a notion must tend to remove from the mind that painful sense we sometimes have of the indifference of nature to our thoughts and doings.

ATHERTON. To remove that feeling from the imagination, at least.

WILLOUGHBY. And that is enough ; for only in imagination can it have existence. Man is so much greater than nature.

GOWER. It does, indeed, make all the difference to poets and artists, whether they read sympathy or apathy in the face of creation. Think of the various forms and agencies of nature—of the swart Cyclopean forces under the earth—of the deftly-woven threadwork of the tissues—of vapour-pageantries, and cloud-cupolas, and fairy curls of smoke—of the changeful polity of the seasons, advancing and disgracing frost or sunshine—of the waves lashing at the land, and the land growing into the waves,—of all these ministries as working, like thoughtful man, toward a divine standard; as rejoicing, in their measure, through every descending range of being, under the restoring hand of the Divine Artificer, and panting to recover the order and the beauty of the Paradise which shines above,—of the Eden which once blossomed here below. Think of the earth, resigning herself each winter to her space of sleep, saying inwardly, ‘I have wrought another year to bring the offspring of my breast nearer to the heavenly pattern hidden in my heart. I rest, another circuit nearer to the final consummation.’ Then there is that upper Paradise—substantial, yet ethereal,—as full of beauty, for finer senses, as earth’s fairest spots for more gross, without aught that is hurtful or discordant. Fill up Behmen’s outline. Picture the heavenly hills and valleys, whispering one to another in odorous airs,—a converse only broken sweetly, from time to time, by the floating tones of some distant angel-psalm, as the quiet of a lake by a gliding swan. There run rivers of life—the jubilant souls of the meditative glens through which they wend. There are what seem birds, gorgeous as sunset clouds, and less earthly,—animal forms, graceful as the antelope, leaping among crags more lustrous than diamond,—creatures mightier than leviathan; and mild-eyed as the dove couching among immortal flowers, or bathing in the crystal sea. The very dust is dazzling and priceless, intersown with the sapphire, the sardonyx, the emerald of heaven; and all the

ground and pavement of that world branching with veins as of gold and silver, an arborescent glory, instinct with mysterious life.

WILLOUGHBY. Thank you, Gower.

GOWER. Thank you, Willoughby. You are my informant. I never read a line of Behmen on my own account, and, what is more, never will.

KATE. Helen and I want you very much to tell us something about the Rosicrucians.

ATHERTON. You have read *Zanoni*——

KATE. And we are all the more curious in consequence. How much of such a story may I think true?

ATHERTON. As an ideal portraiture of that ambition which seeks lordship within the marches of the unseen world, I think *Zanoni* perfect.

MRS. ATHERTON. The Rosicrucians pretended, did they not, that they could prolong life indefinitely,—laid claim to all sorts of wonderful power and knowledge? Have you not once or twice met with a person, or heard of one, who would certainly have been suspected of being a Rosicrucian by superstitious people? I mean, without any pretence on his part, merely from a singular appearance, or a mysterious manner, or uncommon cleverness.

ATHERTON. Oh, yes; such men would keep up the Rosicrucian tradition bravely among the common folk.

WILLOUGHBY. And among great folk, too, if they took the pains.

MRS. ATHERTON. I was thinking of Colonel Napier's description of George Borrow, which we were reading the other day. He pictures him youthful in figure, yet with snow-white hair; inscrutable, therefore, as to age, as the Wandering Jew; he has deep-black mesmeric eyes, terrible to dogs and Portuguese; he is silent about himself to the most tantalizing height of mystery.

no man knowing his whence or whither ; he is master of information astoundingly various, speaks with fluency English, French, German, Spanish, Greek, Hindee, Moultee, the gipsy tongue, and more beside, for aught I know. So equipped, within and without, he might have set up for a Zanon almost anywhere, and succeeded to admiration.

ATHERTON. How small the charlatans look beside such a specimen of true manhood. But where shall we find the distance wider between the ideal and the actual than in this very province of supernatural pretension? What a gulf between the high personage our romance imagines and that roving, dare-devil buccaneer of science, or that shuffling quacksalver which our matter-of-fact research discovers. Don't you agree with me, Willoughby?

WILLOUGHBY. Altogether. Only compare the two sets of figures—what we fancy, and what we find. On the one side you picture to yourself a man Platonically elevated above the grossness and entanglement of human passions, disdaining earth, dauntlessly out-staring the baleful eyes of that nameless horror—the Dweller on the Threshold; commanding the prescience and the power of mightiest spirits; and visited, like Shelley's Witch of Atlas, as he reads the scrolls of some Saturnian Archimage, by universal Pan, who comes with homage 'out of his everlasting lair,'—

'Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant.'

This is the theurgist, as imagination paints him. Now turn, on the other side, to the actual gallery of theosophic and theurgic worthies, as history reveals them. Baptista Porta dwells in a house which is the triumph of legerdemain,—the palace of Puck, the most intricate nest of traps, surprises, optical delusions, grotesque transformations,—throwing host and guests into paroxysms of laughter or of fear. You see Cornelius Agrippa, in threadbare bravery, with his heart upon his sleeve, and every

expression by turns upon his brow, save that of the Platonic serenity. Paracelsus swears worse than my uncle Toby's comrades in Flanders, and raves about his Homunculus. But from such men we cannot withhold sympathy, respect, even a certain admiration. In that eighteenth century, behold that grand magnet for all the loose and dupable social particles in every class and country—the soi-disant Count Cagliostro, with his Seraphina, his Egyptian Lodge, his elixirs and red powder, his magical caraffes, his phosphorous glories, his Pentagon and Columbs, his Seven Planetary Spirits, his Helios, Mene, Tetragrammaton. In that age of professed Illuminism, in the times of Voltaire and Diderot, when universal *Aufklärung* was to banish every mediæval phantasm, you see Father Gassner, with his miraculous cures, followed by crowds through Swabia and Bavaria ;—Mesmer attracting Paris and Vienna to his darkened rooms and hidden music, to be awe-stricken by the cataleptic horrors there achieved ;—the Count St. Germain declaring himself three hundred years old, and professing the occult science of diamond-manufacturing Brahmins ;—the coffee-house keeper, Schröpfer, deluding Leipsic and Frankfort with his pretended theurgic art ;—and St. Maurice, swindling the sceptical wits and *roués* who flutter in the drawing-rooms of Mesdames Du Maine and De Tencin, pretending to open converse for them with sylphs and Salamanders, invoking the genius Alaël, and finally subsiding into the Bastille. Such are some among the actual caricatures of the artistic conception embodied in the character of Zanoni.

ATHERTON. Truly a bad symptom of the general disease, when men grow unable to see that the highest dignity lies close at hand.

WILLOUGHBY. As though man could never exhibit magnanimity unless in some thrilling dramatic 'situation.'

GOWER. Or could not believe in the unseen world save by help of necromancers, miracle-mongers, and clairvoyantes.

ATHERTON. The ancient saying abides true,—He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city,—greater than even he who should carry the cloud-capital of the whole world of spirits, pull down its meteor-flag, and make all the weird garrison his thralls. I think, if I were a preacher, I should some day take up the phase of man's mental history we have now reviewed as a practical exposition of Christ's words—'Nevertheless, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather that your names are written in heaven.'

KATE. I should like to know, after all, precisely who and what these Rosicrucians were. When did they make their first appearance?

WILLOUGHBY. They were originally neither more nor less than the 'Mrs. Harris' of a Lutheran pastor.

MRS. ATHERTON. Mr. Willoughby!

ATHERTON. Fact, Lily. Willoughby never said anything truer.

WILLOUGHBY. Allow me to tell you the story.—About the year 1610, there appeared anonymously a little book, which excited great sensation throughout Germany. It was entitled, *The Discovery of the Brotherhood of the Honourable Order of the Rosy Cross*, and dedicated to all the scholars and magnates of Europe.¹

It commenced with an imaginary dialogue between the Seven Sages of Greece, and other worthies of antiquity, on the best method of accomplishing a general reform in those evil times.

¹ See, concerning the history of this book, and its author, Valentine Andrea, J. G. Buhle, *Ueber den Ursprung und die Vornehmsten Schicksale der Orden der Rosenkreuzer und Freymaurer* (Göttingen, 1804), chapp. iii. and iv. Arnold gives a full account of the controversy, and extracts, which appear to indicate very fairly the character of the Fama Fraternitatis, *Kirchen-und-Ketzergeschichte*, Th. ii. Buch xvii. cap. 18.

The derivation of the name Rosicrucian from *ros* and *crux*, rather than *rosa* and *crux*, to which Brucker alludes (*Hist. Phil.* Per. III. Pars i. lib. 3, cap. 3), is untenable. By rights the word, if from *rosa*, should no doubt be Rosacrucian; but such a malformation, by no means uncommon, cannot outweigh the reasons adduced on behalf of the generally-received etymology. See Buhle, pp. 174, &c.

The suggestion of Seneca is adopted, as most feasible, namely, a secret confederacy of wise philanthropists, who shall labour everywhere in unison for this desirable end. The book then announces the actual existence of such an association. One Christian Rosenkreuz, whose travels in the East had enriched him with the highest treasures of occult lore, is said to have communicated his wisdom, under a vow of secrecy, to eight disciples, for whom he erected a mysterious dwelling-place called The Temple of the Holy Ghost. It is stated further, that this long-hidden edifice had been at last discovered, and within it the body of Rosenkreuz, untouched by corruption, though, since his death, one hundred and twenty years had passed away. The surviving disciples of the institute call on the learned and devout, who desire to co-operate in their projects of reform, to advertise their names. They themselves indicate neither name nor place of rendezvous. They describe themselves as true Protestants. They expressly assert that they contemplate no political movement in hostility to the reigning powers. Their sole aim is the diminution of the fearful sum of human suffering, the spread of education, the advancement of learning, science, universal enlightenment, and love. Traditions and manuscripts in their possession have given them the power of gold-making, with other potent secrets; but by their wealth they set little store. They have *arcana*, in comparison with which the secret of the alchemist is a trifle. But all is subordinate, with them, to their one high purpose of benefiting their fellows both in body and soul.

MRS. ATHERTON. No wonder the book made some noise.

WILLOUGHBY. I could give you conclusive reasons, if it would not tire you to hear them, for the belief that this far-famed book was written by a young Lutheran divine named Valentine Andreä. He was one of the very few who understood the age, and had the heart to try and mend it. You see

him, when his college days are over, starting on his travels—his old mother giving him her tearful ‘God bless you,’ as she puts into his hand all the treasure of her poverty,—a rusty old coin, and twelve kreuzer. From the cottage-door her gaze follows with many a prayer the good son, whose beloved form lessens along the country road. Years after, he comes back, bringing with him the same old coin, and with it several hundred gulden. He has seen the world, toiling, with quick observant eye and brave kindly heart, through south and western Germany, among the Alps, through Italy and France. He has been sometimes in clover as a travelling tutor, sometimes he has slept and fared hard, under vine-hedges, in noisy, dirty little inns, among carriers, packmen, and travelling apprentices. The candidate becomes pastor, and proves himself wise in men as well as books. A philanthropist by nature, he is not one of those dreamers who hate all that will not aid their one pet scheme, and cant about a general brotherhood which exempts them from particular charity. Wherever the church, the school, the institute of charity have fallen into ruin or disorder by stress of war, by fraud, or selfish neglect, there the indefatigable Andreä appears to restore them. He devises new plans of benevolence,—appealing, persuading, rebuking. He endures the petulance of disturbed indolence, the persecution of exposed abuse ; bearing with, and winning over, all sorts of hopeless crabbed people, thrusting men’s hands into their pockets, they know not how. He is an arch bore in the eyes of miserly burgomasters and slumberous brother clergy—a very patron-saint for the needy and distressed, the orphan and the widow. To this robust practical benevolence was added a genial humour, not uncommon in minds of strength like his, and a certain trenchant skill in satirical delineation which renders some of his writings among the most serviceable to the historian of those times.

GOWER. Oh, how I love that man !

WILLOUGHBY. Well, this Andreä writes the *Discovery of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood*, a *jeu-d'esprit* with a serious purpose, just as an experiment to see whether something cannot be done by combined effort to remedy the defect and abuses—social, educational, and religious, so lamented by all good men. He thought there were many Andreäs scattered throughout Europe—how powerful would be their united systematic action !

KATE. But why mix up with his proposal all this idle fabling about Rosenkreuz and his fraternity ?

WILLOUGHBY. But for that spice of romance, this notion of his could never have done more than chip the shell or sprawl helpless in the nest. The promise of supernatural powers awakened universal attention—fledged, and gave it strength to fly through Europe.

MRS. ATHERTON. But the hoax could not last long, and would, after all, encourage those idle superstitions which were among the most mischievous of the errors he was trying to put down.

WILLOUGHBY. So indeed it proved. But his expectation was otherwise. He hoped that the few nobler minds whom he desired to organize would see through the veil of fiction in which he had invested his proposal ; that he might communicate personally with some such, if they should appear ; or that his book might lead them to form among themselves a practical philanthropic confederacy, answering to the serious purpose he had embodied in his fiction. Let the empty charlatan and the ignoble gold-seeker be fooled to the top of their bent, their blank disappointment would be an excellent jest ; only let some few, to whom humanity was more dear than bullion, be stimulated to a new enterprise.

GOWER. The scheme was certain, at any rate, to procure him some amusement.

WILLOUGHBY. Many a laugh, you may be sure, he enjoyed in his parsonage with his few friends who were in the secret, when they found their fable everywhere swallowed greedily as unquestionable fact. On all sides they heard of search instituted to discover the Temple of the Holy Ghost. Printed letters appear continually, addressed to the imaginary brotherhood, giving generally the initials of the candidate, where the invisibles might hear of him, stating his motives and qualifications for entrance into their number, and sometimes furnishing samples of his cabbalistic acquirements. Still, no answer. Not a trace of the Temple. Profound darkness and silence, after the brilliant flash which had awakened so many hopes. Soon the mirth grew serious. Andreä saw with concern that shrewd heads of the wrong sort began to scent his artifice, while quacks reaped a rogue's harvest from it. The reality was ridiculed as fiction, and the fiction hailed as reality. Society was full of the rotten combustible matter which his spark had kindled into a conflagration he could not hope to stay. A cloud of books and pamphlets issued from the press, for and against the fraternity, whose actual house lay beneath the Doctor's hat of Valentine Andreä. Medical practitioners of the old school, who denounced the spagiric method, and to whom the name of Paracelsus was an abomination, ridiculed the Rosicrucian secrets, and scoffed at their offer of gratuitous cures. Orthodox divines, like Libavius, swinging a heavy club, cruelly demolished the little book,—which, of a truth, was not fit to sustain rough handling. They called down fire from heaven on its unknown authors, and declared that their *rosa* should be *rota*—their rose, the wheel. Meanwhile a number of enthusiasts became volunteer expositors of the principle and aim of this undiscoverable brotherhood. Andreä saw his scheme look as ridiculous in the hands of its credulous friends as it seemed odious in those of its enemies. A swarm of impostors pretended to belong to

the Fraternity, and found a readier sale than ever for their nostrums. Andreä dared not reveal himself. All he could do was to write book after book to expose the folly of those whom his handiwork had so befooled, and still to labour on, by pen and speech, in earnest aid of that reform which his unhappy stratagem had less helped than hindered.

MRS. ATHERTON. And was no society ever actually formed?

WILLOUGHBY. I believe not; nothing, at least, answering in any way to Andreä's design. Confederacies of pretenders appear to have been organized in various places; but Descartes says he sought in vain for a Rosicrucian lodge in Germany. The name Rosicrucian became by degrees a generic term, embracing every species of occult pretension,—arcana, elixirs, the philosopher's stone, theurgic ritual, symbols, initiations. In general usage the term is associated more especially with that branch of the secret art which has to do with the creatures of the elements.

ATHERTON. And from this deposit of current mystical tradition sprang, in great measure, the Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism of the eighteenth century,—that golden age of secret societies. Then flourished associations of every imaginable kind, suited to every taste. The gourmand might be sure of a good dinner in one; the alchemist might hope to catch his secret in a second; the place-hunter might strengthen his interest in the brotherhood of a third; and, in all, the curious and the credulous might be fleeced to their hearts' content. Some lodges belonged to Protestant societies, others were the implements of the Jesuits. Some were aristocratic, like the Strict Observance; others democratic, seeking in vain to escape an Argus-eyed police. Some—like the Illuminati under Weishaupt, Knigge, and Von Zwackh, numbering (among many knaves) not a few names of rank, probity, and learning—were the professed enemies of mysticism and superstition.

Others existed only for the profitable juggle of incantations and fortune-telling. The lodges contended with each other and among themselves ; divided and subdivided ; modified and remodified their constitutions ; blended and dispersed ; till, at last, we almost cease to hear of them. The best perished at the hands of the Jesuits, the worst at the hands of the police.

WILLOUGHBY. At Vienna, the Rosicrucians and Freemasons were at one time so much the rage that a modification of the mason's apron became a fashionable part of female dress, and chatelaines were made of miniature hammers, circles, and plumb-lines.

KATE. Very pretty, some of them, I dare say.

ATHERTON. Do you remember, Gower, that large old house we saw at Vienna, called the Stift ?

GOWER. Perfectly, and the Stift-gasse, too, leading to it, for there I got wet through.

ATHERTON. That building is the relic of a charity founded by a professed Rosicrucian. He took the name of Chaos (after their fashion)—every brother changing his name for some such title as Sol, Aureus, Mercurius, and so on, according to his taste. He came to Vienna in the seventeenth century, and somehow, whether by his alchemy or not I cannot say, acquired both fortune and nobility. Ferdinand III. made him Hof-kammerath, and prefixed a Von to the Chaos. This good man founded an institution for orphans, who were once educated in that house, since converted into a military academy, and bearing still, in its name and neighbourhood, traces of the original endowment.

MRS. ATHERTON. Andreä would have taken some comfort could he but have seen at least that practical fruit of his Rosicrucian whim. How his heart would have rejoiced to hear the hum of the orphan school-room, and to see their smoking platters !

KATE. My curiosity is not yet satisfied. I should like to know something more about those most poetical beings, the creatures of the elements,—Sylph, Undine, and Co.

ATHERTON. On this subject, Kate, I am happy to be able to satisfy you. I can conduct you at once to the fountain-head. I will read you the process enjoined in the *Comte de Gabalis* for attaining to converse with some of these fanciful creations. (*Taking down a little book.*) Here is the passage.² (*Reads.*)

‘If we wish to recover our empire over the salamanders, we must purify and exalt the element of fire we have within us, and restore the tone of this chord which desuetude has so relaxed. We have only to concentrate the fire of the world, by concave mirrors, in a globe of glass. This is the process all the ancients have religiously kept secret; it was revealed by the divine Theophrastus. In such a globe is formed a solar powder, and this, self-purified from the admixture of other elements, and prepared according to the rules of art, acquires, in a very short time, a sovereign virtue for the exaltation of the fire within us, and renders us, so to speak, of an igneous nature. Henceforth the inhabitants of the fiery sphere become our inferiors. Delighted to find our reciprocal harmony restored, and to see us drawing near to them, they feel for us all the friendship they have for their own species, all the respect they owe to the image and vicegerent of their Creator, and pay us every attention that can be prompted by the desire of

² *Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les Sciences Secretes* (Metz, an cinq. républicain), pp. 53-56.

The following passage is a sample of those high-sounding promises with which the pretenders to the Rosicrucian science allured the neophyte:—

‘You are about to learn (says the Count to the author) how to command all nature: God alone will be your master; the philosophers alone your equals. The highest intelligences will be ambitious to obey your desire; the

demons will not dare to approach the place where you are; your voice will make them tremble in the depths of the abyss, and all the invisible populace of the four elements will deem themselves happy to minister to your pleasures. . . . Have you the courage and the ambition to serve God alone, and to be lord over all that is not God? Have you understood what it is to be a man? Are you not weary of serving as a slave,—you, who were born for dominion?’—(p. 27.)

obtaining at our hands that immortality which does not naturally belong to them. The salamanders, however, as they are more subtile than the creatures of the other elements, live a very long time, and are therefore less urgent in seeking from the sage that affection which endows them with immortality.

‘It is otherwise with the sylphs, the gnomes, and the nymphs. As they live a shorter time, they have more inducement to court our regard, and it is much easier to become intimate with them. You have only to fill a glass vessel with compressed air, with earth, or with water, close it up, and leave it exposed to the sun’s rays for a month. After that time, effect a scientific separation of the elements, which you will easily accomplish, more especially with earth or water. It is wonderful to see what a charm each of the elements thus purified possesses for attracting nymphs, sylphs, and gnomes. After taking the smallest particle of this preparation every day for a few months, you see in the air the flying commonwealth of the sylphs, the nymphs coming in crowds to the waterside, and the guardians of hidden treasure displaying their stores of wealth. Thus, without magical figures, without ceremonies, without barbarous terms, an absolute power is acquired over all these people of the elements. They require no homage from the philosopher, for they know well that he is their superior. Thus does man recover his natural empire, and become omnipotent in the region of the elements, without aid of dæmon, without illicit art.’

Of course you have all learnt from Undine that the creatures of the elements are supposed to obtain a soul, and become immortal by alliance with one of our race. There is a double advantage, too, for these happy philosophers may not only raise their nymph or sylphide to a share with them in the happiness of heaven, if they reach it, but if the sage should be so unfortu-

nate as not to be predestined to an immortality of blessedness, his union with one of these beings will operate on himself conversely,—that is, will render his soul mortal, and deliver him from the horrors of the endless second death. So Satan misses his prey in either sphere.

WILLOUGHBY. I never knew before that these cabbalists were Calvinists.

ATHERTON. This touch of Jansenism excites the same astonishment in the author of the *Comte de Gabalis*. A delightful wag, that Abbé Villars !

The philosophers are described by the Count as the instructors and the saviours of the poor elementary folk, who, but for their assistance in forming *liaisons* with mortals, would inevitably at last fall into the hands of their enemy, the devil. As soon, he says, as a sylph has learnt from us how to pronounce cabbalistically the potent name NEHMAHMIHAH,³ and to combine it, in due form, with the delicious name ELIAËL, all the powers of darkness take to flight, and the sylph enjoys, unmolested, the love he seeks !

WILLOUGHBY. How universal seems to have been the faith in the magical efficacy of certain words, from the earliest to the latest times, among the more sober as well as the most extravagant theurgists. A long list of them might be drawn up. There is the Indian O-U-M ; there are the Ephesian letters ; with Demogorgon, ‘dreaded name,’ as Milton reminds us ; the barbarous words, too, which the Chaldean oracles and Psellus declare must on no account be Hellenised.

GOWER. And the word AGLA, I remember, in Colin de Plancy, which, when duly pronounced, facing the east, makes absent persons appear, and discovers lost property.⁴ I suppose the potency is in proportion to the unintelligibility of the terms.

³ *Comte de Gabalis*, p. 185. See the story of Noah’s calamity, and the salamander Oromasis, p. 140.

⁴ See Colin de Plancy’s *Dictionnaire*

Infernal, Art. Cabale. Horst furnishes a number of such words, *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. III. xvi. 2.

ATHERTON. The Comte de Gabalis tells us how the Salamander Oramasis enabled Shem and Japhet to restore the patriarch Noah to his former vigour by instructing them how to pronounce six times alternately, walking backward, the tremendous name JABAMIAH.

But the word above every word is the SHEMHAMPHORASH of the Talmud.⁵ The latter rabbins say that Moses was forty days on Mount Sinai, to learn it of the angel Saxael. Solomon achieved his fiend-compelling wonders by its aid. Jesus of Nazareth, they say, stole it from the Temple, and was enabled by its virtue to delude the people. It is now, alas! lost; but could any one rightly and devoutly pronounce it, he would be able to create therewith a world. Even approximate sounds and letters, supplied by rabbinical conjecture, give their possessor power over the spirit-world, from the first-class archangel to the vulgar ghost: he can heal the sick, raise the dead, and destroy his enemies.

WILLOUGHBY. It is curious to see some of these theosophists,

⁵ Horst inserts in his *Zauberbibliothek* the whole of a once famous cabalistic treatise, entitled *Semiphoras et Shemhamphoras Salomonis Regis*, a medley of astrological and theurgic doctrine and prescription. The word Shemhamphorash is not the real word of power, but an expression or conventional representative of it. The Rabbis dispute whether the genuine word consisted of twelve, two-and-forty, or two-and-seventy-letters. Their Gematria or cabalistic arithmetic, endeavours partially to reconstruct it. They are agreed that the prayers of Israel avail now so little because this word is lost, and they know not 'the name of the Lord.' But a couple of its real letters, inscribed by a potent cabalist on a tablet, and thrown into the sea, raised the storm which destroyed the fleet of Charles V. in 1542. Write it on the person of a prince (a ticklish business, surely), and you are sure of his abiding

favour. Eisenmenger gives a full account of all the legends connected therewith, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, vol. i. pp. 157, 424, 581, &c. (Ed. 1711).

The rationale of its virtue, if we may so call it, affords a characteristic illustration of the cabalistic principle. The Divine Being was supposed to have commenced the work of creation by concentrating on certain points the primal universal Light. Within the region of these was the appointed place of our world. Out of the remaining luminous points, or foci, he constructed certain letters—a heavenly alphabet. These characters he again combined into certain creative words, whose secret potency produced the forms of the material world. The word Shemhamphorash contains the sum of these celestial letters, with all their inherent virtue, in its mightiest combination.—Horst, *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. iv. p. 131.

who cry out so against the letter, becoming its abject bondsmen among the puerilities of the Cabbala. They protest loudly that the mere letter is an empty shell—and then discover stupendous powers lying intrenched within the curves and angles of a Hebrew character.

ATHERTON. Our seventeenth century mystics, even when most given to romancing, occupied but a mere corner of that land of marvel in which their Jewish contemporaries rejoiced. The Jews, in their dæmonology, leave the most fantastic conceptions of all other times and nations at an immeasurable distance. Their affluence of devils is amazing. Think of it!—Rabbi Huna tells you that every rabbi has a thousand dæmons at his left hand, and ten thousand at his right: the sensation of closeness in a room of Jewish assembly comes from the press of their crowding multitudes: has a rabbi a threadbare gabardine and holes in his shoes, it is from the friction of the swarming devilry that everywhere attends him.⁶

GOWER. To return to societies—did you ever hear, Willoughby, of the Philadelphian Association?⁷

WILLOUGHBY. That founded by Pordage, do you mean—the doctor who fought the giant so stoutly one night?

GOWER. The same. I picked up a book of his at a stall the other day.

KATE. Who was he? Pray tell us the story of the battle.

GOWER. A Royalist clergyman who took to medicine under the Protectorate. The story is simply this.—Pordage, whose veracity even his enemies do not impugn, declares that he

⁶ See *Das transcendente magie und magische Heilarten im Talmud*, von Dr. G. Brecher, p. 52. Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, ii. pp. 445, &c.

The *Tractat Berachoth* says the devils delight to be about the Rabbis, as a wife desireth her husband, and a

thirsty land longeth after water,—because their persons are so agreeable. Not so, rejoins Eisenmenger, but because both hate the gospel and love the works of darkness.—(p. 447.)

⁷ See Horst's *Zauberbibliothek*, vol. i. pp. 314-327.

woke from sleep one night, and saw before his bed a giant 'horrible and high,' with an enormous sword drawn in one hand, and an uprooted tree in the other. The monster evidently means mischief. The Doctor seizes his walking-stick. Round swings the lumbering tree-trunk, up goes the nimble staff——

ATHERTON. What became of the bedposts?

GOWER. Hush, base materialist! The weapons were but the symbols of the conflict, and were symbolically flourished. The real combat was one of spirit against spirit—wholly internal; what would now be called electro-biological. Each antagonist bent against his foe the utmost strength of will and imagination.

WILLOUGHBY. Somewhat after the manner of the Astras which the Indian gods hurled at each other—spells of strong volition, which could parch their object with heat, freeze him with cold, lash him with hail, shut him up in immobility, though hundreds of miles away.

ATHERTON. Surpassing powers those, indeed; not even requiring the present eye and will of the operator to master the imagination of the subject mind.

KATE. And the battle in the bedroom?

GOWER. Lasted half an hour; when the giant, finding Dr. Pordage a tough customer, took his departure.

WILLOUGHBY. Pordage was a great student and admirer of Behmen; but, unlike his master, an inveterate spirit-seer. I dare say he actually had a dream to the effect you relate.

GOWER. But he and the whole Philadelphian Society—a coterie of some twenty ghost-seers—profess to have seen apparitions of angels and devils, in broad daylight, every day, for nearly a month.

MRS. ATHERTON. What were they like?

GOWER. The chief devils drove in chariots of black cloud, drawn by inferior dæmons in the form of dragons, bears, and lions. The spirits of wicked men were the ugliest of all,—

cloven-footed, cats-eared, tusked, crooked-mouthed, bow-legged creatures.

ATHERTON. Did the Philadelphians profess to see the spirits with the inward or the bodily eye?

GOWER. With both. They saw them in whole armies and processions, gliding in through wall or window-pane—saw them as well with the eyes shut as open. For, by means of the sympathy between soul and body, the outer eye, says Pordage, is made to share the vision of the inner. When we cease to use that organ, the internal vision is no less active. I should add that the members were conscious of a most unpleasant smell, and were troubled with a sulphurous taste in the mouth while such appearances lasted.

WILLOUGHBY. Mrs. Leade is one of the most conspicuous of their number,—a widow of good family from Norfolk, who forsook the world and retired into her inmost self, holding intercourse with spirits and writing her revelations.

GOWER. She, I believe, carried to its practical extreme the Paracelsian doctrine concerning the magical power of faith.

WILLOUGHBY. That is her one idea. By union with the divine will, she says, the ancient believers wrought their miracles. Faith has now the same prerogative: the will of the soul, wholly yielded to God, becomes a resistless power, can bind and loose, bless and ban, throughout the universe. Had any considerable number among men a faith so strong, rebellious nature would be subdued by their holy spells, and Paradise restored.

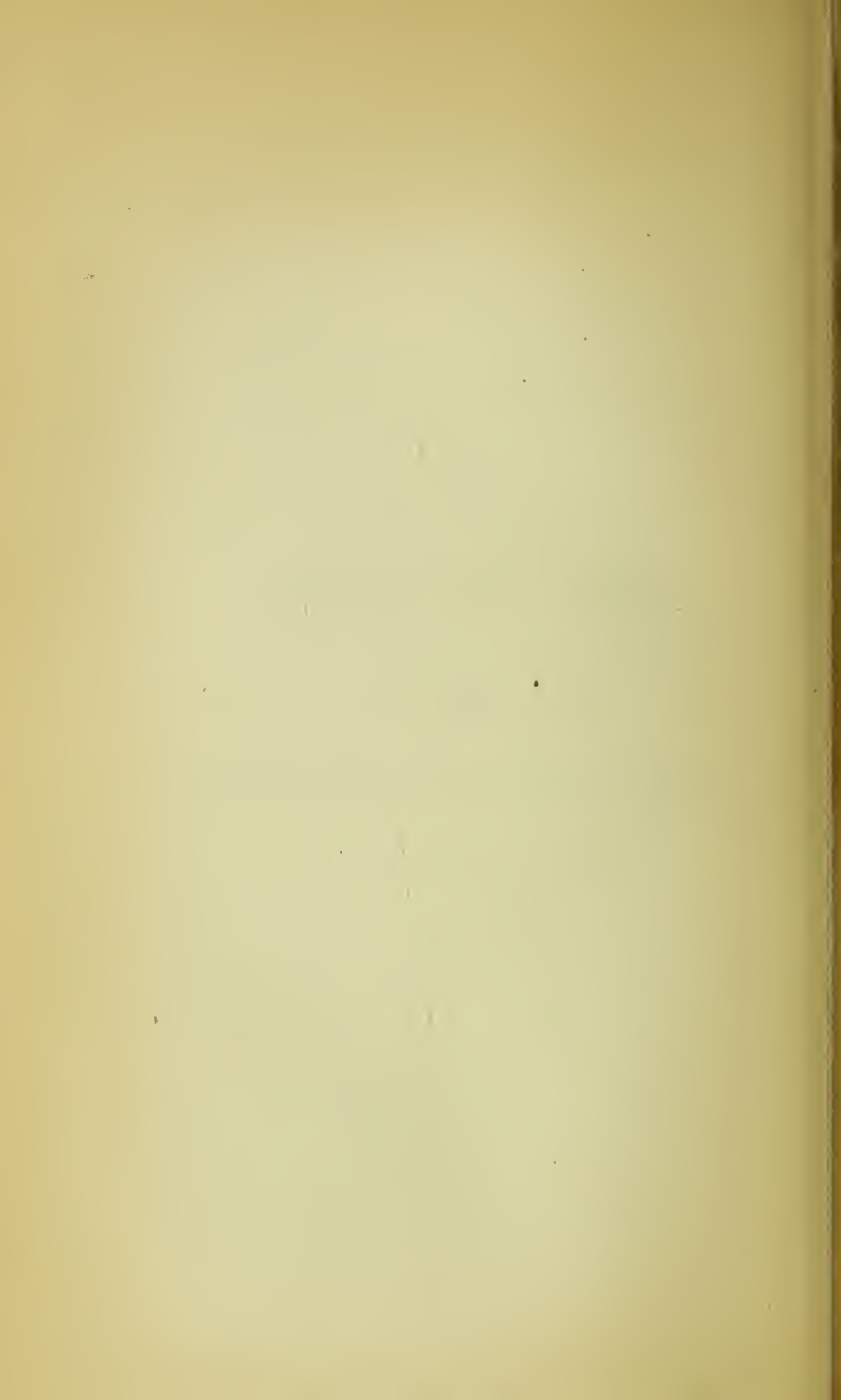
ATHERTON. Some of the German Romanticists have revived this idea—never, perhaps, wholly dead. Some stir was made for awhile by the theory that the power of miracle was native in man—and haply recoverable.

WILLOUGHBY. Such a doctrine is but one among the many retrogressions of the mediæval school.

BOOK THE NINTH



THE SPANISH MYSTICS



CHAPTER I.

It is no flaming lustre, made of light,
No sweet concert nor well-timed harmony,
Ambrosia, for to feast the appetite,
Of flowery odour mixed with spicery,—
No soft embrace, or pleasure bodily ;
And yet it is a kind of inward feast,
A harmony that sounds within the breast,
An odour, light, embrace, in which the soul doth rest.

A heavenly feast no hunger can consume ;
A light unseen yet shines in every place ;
A sound no time can steal ; a sweet perfume
No winds can scatter ; an entire embrace
That no satiety can e'er unlace ;
Engraced into so high a favour there,
The saints with all their peers whole worlds outwear,
And things unseen do see, and thing unheard do hear.

GILES FLETCHER.

GOWER fulfilled his promise, and read, on two successive evenings, the following paper on the Mysticism of the Counter-Reformation, as illustrated principally by its two Spanish champions, St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross :—

I. *Saint Theresa.*

On the revival of letters the mysticism of Alexandria reappeared in Florence. That lamp which, in the study of Ficinus, burnt night and day before the bust of Plato, proclaimed, in reality, the worship of Plotinus. The erudite feebleness of Alexandrian eclecticism lived again in Gemisthus Pletho,—blended, as of old, Platonic ideas, oriental emanations, and Hellenic legend,—dreamed of a philosophic worship, emasculated and universal, which should harmonize in a common vagueness all the religions of the world. Nicholas of Cusa re-

adapted the allegorical mathematics which had flourished beneath the Ptolemies and restored the Pythagoras of the Neo-Platonists. Pico of Mirandola (the admirable Crichton of his time) sought to reconcile the dialectics of Aristotle with the oracles of Chaldæa, and to breathe into withered scholasticism the mysterious life of Cabbalistic wisdom. An age so greedy of antiquity was imposed on by the most palpable fabrications; and Greece beheld the servile product of her second childhood revered as the vigorous promise of her first. Patricius sought the sources of Greek philosophy in writings attributed to Hermes and Zoroaster. He wrote to Gregory XIV. proposing that authors such as these should be substituted for Aristotle in the schools, as the best means of advancing true religion and reclaiming heretical Germany.

The position of these scholars with regard to Protestantism resembles, not a little, that of their Alexandrian predecessors when confronted by Christianity. They were the philosophic advocates of a religion in which they had themselves lost faith. They attempted to reconcile a corrupt philosophy and a corrupt religion, and they made both worse. The love of literature and art was confined to a narrow circle of courtiers and literati. While Lutheran pamphlets in the vernacular set all the North in a flame, the philosophic refinements of the Florentine diletanti were aristocratic, exclusive, and powerless. Their intellectual position was fatal to sincerity; their social condition equally so to freedom. The despotism of the Roman emperors was more easily evaded by a philosopher of ancient times than the tyranny of a Visconti or a D'Este, by a scholar at Milan or Ferrara. It was the fashion to patronise men of letters. But the usual return of subservience and flattery was rigorously exacted. The Italians of the fifteenth century had long ceased to be familiar with the worst horrors of war, and Charles VIII., with his ferocious Frenchmen, appeared to them another Attila.

Each Italian state underwent, on its petty scale, the fate of Imperial Rome. The philosophic and religious conservatism of Florence professed devotion to a church which reproduced, with most prolific abundance, the superstitions of by-gone Paganism,—of that very Paganism in whose behalf the Neo-Platonist philosopher entered the lists against the Christian father. To such men, the earnest religious movement of the North was the same mysterious, barbaric, formidable foe which primitive Christianity had been to the Alexandrians. The old conflict between Pagan and Christian—the man of taste and the man of faith—the man who lived for the past, and the man who lived for the future, was renewed, in the sixteenth century, between the Italian and the German. The Florentine Platonists, moreover, not only shared in the weakness of their prototypes, as the occupants of an attitude radically false; they failed to exhibit in their lives that austerity of morals which won respect for Plotinus and Porphyry, even among those who cared nothing for their speculations. Had Romanism been unable to find defenders more thoroughly in earnest, the shock she then received must have been her deathblow. She must have perished as Paganism perished. But, wise in her generation, she took her cause out of the hands of that graceful and heartless Deism, so artificial and so self-conscious,—too impalpable and too refined for any real service to gods or men. She needed men as full of religious convictions as were these of philosophical and poetic conceits. She needed men to whom the bland and easy incredulity of such symposium-loving scholars was utterly inconceivable—abhorrent as the devil and all his works. And such men she found. For by reason of the measure of truth she held, she was as powerful to enslave the noblest as to unleash the vilest passions of our nature. It was given her, she said, to bind and to loose. It was time, she knew, to bind up mercy and to loose revenge. A succession

of ferocious sanctities fulminated from the chair of St. Peter. Science was immured in the person of Galileo. The scholarship, so beloved by Leo, would have been flung into the jaws of the Inquisition by Caraffa. Every avenue, open once on sufferance, to freer thought and action, was rigorously blocked up. Princes were found willing to cut off the right hand, pluck out the right eye of their people, that Rome might triumph by this suicide of nations. But nowhere did she find a prince and a people alike so swift to shed blood at her bidding, as among that imperious race of which Philip II. was at once the sovereign and the type. In Spain was found, in its perfection, the chivalry of persecution: there dwelt the aristocracy of fanaticism. It was long doubtful whether the Roman or the Spanish Inquisition was the more terrible for craft, the more ingenious in torments, the more glorious with blood.

But Spain was not merely the political and military head of the Counter-Reformation. She contributed illustrious names to relume the waning galaxy of saints. Pre-eminent among these luminaries shine Ignatius Loyola, Theresa, and John of the Cross. The first taught Rome what she had yet to learn in the diplomacy of superstition. Education and intrigue became the special province of his order: it was the training school of the teachers: it claimed and merited the monopoly of the vizard manufacture. Rome found in Theresa her most famous seeress; in John, her consummate ascetic. It was not in the upper region of mysticism that the narrow intellect and invincible will of Loyola were to realize distinction. He had his revelations, indeed,—was rapt away to behold the mystery of the Trinity made manifest, and the processes of creation detailed. But such favours are only the usual insignia so proper to the founder of an order. Compared with St. Francis the life of Ignatius is poor in vision and in miracle. But his relics have since made him ample amends. Bartoli enumerates

a hundred miraculous cures.¹ John and Theresa were mystics *par excellence*: the former, of the most abstract theopathic school; the latter, with a large infusion of the theurgic element, unrivalled in vision—angelic and dæmoniacal.

But one principle is dominant in the three, and is the secret of the saintly honours paid them. In the alarm and wrath awakened by the Reformation, Rome was supremely concerned to enforce the doctrine of blind obedience to ecclesiastical superiors. These Spanish saints lived and laboured and suffered to commend this dogma to the Church and to all mankind. Summoned by the Rule of Obedience, they were ready to inflict or to endure the utmost misery. Their natures were precisely of the kind most fitted to render service and receive promotion at that juncture. They were glowing and ductile. Their very virtues were the dazzle of the red-hot brand, about to stamp the brow with slavery. Each excellence displayed by such accomplished advocates of wrong, withered one of the rising hopes of mankind. Their prayers watered with poisoned water every growth of promise in the field of Europe. Their Herculean labours were undertaken, not to destroy, but to multiply the monsters which infested every highway of thought. Wherever the tears of Theresa fell, new weeds of superstition sprang up. Every shining austerity endured by John gilded another link in the chain which should bind his fellows. The jubilant bells of their devotion rang the knell of innumerable martyrs.

In the fourteenth century, mysticism was often synonymous with considerable freedom of thought. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was allowed to exist only as it subserved the ecclesiastical scheme. The problem was,—how to excite the feeling and imagination of the devotee to the highest pitch, and yet to retain him in complete subjection to

¹ Alban Butler, July 31.

the slightest movement of the rein. Of this problem John and Theresa are the practical and complete solution. All their fire went off by the legitimate conducting-rod: every flash was serviceable: not a gleam was wasted. Once mysticism was a kind of escape for nature. The mystic left behind him much of the coarse externalism necessary to his Church, and found refuge in an inner world of feeling and imagination. But now the Church, by means of the confessor, made mysticism itself the innermost dungeon of her prison-house. Every emotion was methodically docketed; every yearning of the heart minutely catalogued. The sighs must always ascend in the right place: the tears must trickle in orthodox course. The prying calculations of the casuist had measured the sweep of every wave in the heaving ocean of the soul. The instant terrible knife cut off the first spray of love that shot out beyond the trimly-shaven border of prescription. Strong feelings were dangerous guests, unless they knew (like the old Romans) when to go home and slay themselves, did that Tiberius, the director, but bestow on them a frown.

In France, too, mysticism was to fall under the same yoke; but the Frenchman could never reach the hard austerity of the Spaniard. The sixteenth century produced St. Francis de Sales on the north, and St. John of the Cross on the south, of the Pyrenees. With the former, mysticism is tender, genial, graceful; it appeals to every class; it loves and would win all men. With the latter, it is a dark negation—a protracted suffering—an anguish and a joy known only to the cloister. De Sales was to John, as a mystic, what Henry IV. was to Philip as a Catholic King. Even in Italy, the Counter-Reformation was comparatively humane and philanthropic with Carlo Borromeo. In Spain alone is it little more, at its very best, than a fantastic gloom and a passionate severity.

But everywhere the principle of subserviency is in the ascen-

dant. The valetudinarian devotee becomes more and more the puppet of his spiritual doctor. The director winds him up. He derives his spiritless semblance of life wholly from the priestly mechanism. It may be said of him, as of the sick man in Massinger's play,

That he lives he owes
To art, not Nature ; she has given him o'er.
He moves, like the fairy king, on screws and wheels
Made by his doctor's recipes, and yet still
They are out of joint, and every day repairing.

Theresa was born at Avila, in the year 1515, just two years (as Ribadeneira reminds us) before 'that worst of men,' Martin Luther.² The lives of the saints were her nursery tales. Cinderella is matter of fact ; Jack and the Beanstalk commonplace, beside the marvellous stories that must have nourished her infantine faculty of wonder. At seven years old she thinks eternal bliss cheaply bought by martyrdom ; sets out with her little brother on a walk to Africa, hoping to be despatched by the Moors, and is restored to her disconsolate parents by a cruel matter-of-fact uncle, who meets them at the bridge. Her dolls' houses are nunneries. These children construct in the garden, not dirt pies, but mud-hermitages ; which, alas ! will always tumble down.

As she grows up, some gay associates, whose talk is of ribbons, lovers, and bull-fights, secularise her susceptible mind. She reads many romances of chivalry, and spends more time at the glass. Her father sends her, when fifteen, to a convent of Augustinian nuns in Avila, to rekindle her failing devotion. A few days reconcile her to the change, and she is as religious as ever.

Then, what with a violent fever, Jerome's Epistles, and a priest-ridden uncle, she resolves on becoming a nun. Her

² Ribadeneira, *Flos Sanctorum*, Appendix, p. 35 (Ed. 1659).

father refuses his consent ; so she determines on a pious elopement, and escapes to the Carmelite convent. There she took the vows in her twentieth year.³

We find her presently vexed, like so many of the Romanist female saints, with a strange complication of maladies,—cramps, convulsions, catalepsies, vomitings, faintings, &c. &c. . At one time she lay four days in a state of coma ; her grave was dug ; hot wax had been dropped upon her eyelids, and extreme unction administered ; the funeral service was performed ; when she came to herself, expressed her desire to confess, and received the sacrament.⁴ It is not improbable that some of the trances she subsequently experienced, and regarded as supernatural, may have been bodily seizures of a similar kind. But at this time she was not good enough for such favours ; so the attacks are attributed to natural causes. It is significant that the miraculous manifestations of the Romish Church should have been vouchsafed only to women whose constitution (as in the case of the Catharines and Lidwina) was thoroughly broken down by years of agonizing disease. After three years (thanks to St. Joseph) Theresa was restored to comparative health, but remained subject all her life, at intervals, to severe pains.⁵

On her recovery, she found her heart still but too much divided between Christ and the world. That is to say, she was glad when her friends came to see her, and she enjoyed witty and agreeable chat, through the grating, with ladies whose conversation was not always confined to spiritual topics. Griev-

³ *Los Libros de la B. M. Teresa de Jesus, Vida*, capp. i. iii. This edition of 1615 contains the *Camino de la Perfeccion*, and the *Castillo espiritual*, with the *Life*. The *Foundations*, at which I have only glanced in the French, are devoted to business, not mysticism.

⁴ *Vida*, cap. v. p. 26.

⁵ Teresa confesses that during the first year of her seizure her disorder was such as sometimes completely to deprive her of her senses :—*Tan grave, que casi me privava el sentido siempre, y algunas vezes del todo quedava sin el.* —Pp. 17.

ously did her conscience smite her for such unfaithfulness, and bitterly does she regret the laxity of her confessors, who failed to tell her that it was a heinous crime.

In her twenty-fourth year she resumed the practice of mental prayer, and for the next twenty years continued it, with many inward vicissitudes, and alternate tendernesses and desertions on the part of the Divine Bridegroom. Her forty-fourth year is memorable as the season of her entrance on those higher experiences, which have made her name famous as the great revivalist of supernatural prayer and mystical devotion in the sixteenth century.

The Saint Bartholomew's day of 1562 was a day of glory for our saint. Then was consecrated the new Convent of St. Joseph, at Avila, established in spite of so much uproar and opposition; that convent wherein the primitive austerity of the Carmelite Order was to be restored,—where Theresa is presently appointed prioress (against her will, as usual),—where there shall be no chats at the grating, no rich endowment; but thirteen 'fervent virgins' shall dwell there, discalceated (that is sandalled not shod), serge-clad, flesh-abhorring, couched on straw, and all but perpetually dumb.⁶ The remainder of her life, from about her fiftieth year, would appear to have been somewhat less fertile in marvellous experiences. She was now recognised as the foundress of the Reformed Carmelites, and could produce warrant from Rome, authorizing her to found as many convents of the Bare-footed as she pleased. She was harassed by the jealous intrigues of the old 'mitigated' Order, but indefatigably befriended by John of the Cross, and other thorough-going ascetics. She lived to see established sixteen nunneries of the Reformed, and fourteen monasteries for friars of the same rule. She has left us a long history of her foundations, of all the troubles and difficulties

⁶ *Vida*, cap. xxxvi.

she overcame ; showing how funds were often not forthcoming, but faith was ; how apathy and opposition were done away ; and how busy she must have been (too busy for many visions) ; all of which let whomsoever read that can.

In the year 1562, when Theresa had successfully commenced the reformation of her Order, she wrote her life, at the bidding of her confessor. In this autobiography her spiritual history is laid bare without reserve. The narrative was published by her superiors, and therein the heretic may listen to what she whispered in the ear of her director during the years most prolific in extravagance. We can thus discern the working of the confessional. Commanded to disclose her most secret thoughts, we see her nervously afraid of omitting to indicate the minutest variations of the religious thermometer, of approaching the committal of that sin which Romanist devotees only can commit—concealment from a confessor. She searches for evil in herself, and creates it by the search. The filmiest evanescence of the feeling has to be detained and anatomized, and changes into something else under the scrutiny. It is as though she had let into her crucifix a piece of looking-glass, that she might see reflected every transport of devotion, and faithfully register the same in her memory against the next shrift. After some excess of rapture, she must set to work at her technical analysis ; observe what faculties were dormant, and what still active—what regions of the mind were tenanted by divinity, and what still left to the possession of her sinful self. Her intellect was never strong. She confesses that she found her understanding rather in the way than otherwise.⁷ Under this omnipresent spiritual despotism it fell prostrate utterly. When she has been favoured with a vision, she is not to know whether it has steamed up from hell or been let down

⁷ *Vida*, p. 83.

from heaven, until the decision of her confessor fills her with horror or delight. The cloister is her universe. Her mind, unformed, and uninformed, is an empty room, papered with leaves from her breviary. She knew little of that charity which makes gracious inroads on the outer world; which rendered human so many of her sister-saints; which we admire and pity in Madame de Chantal, admire and love in Madame Guyon. No feet-washing do we read of, open or secret; no hospital-tending, no ministry among the poor. The greater activity of her later years brought her in contact with scarcely any but 'religious' persons. Her ascetic zeal was directed, not for, but against, the mitigation of suffering. It made many monks and nuns uncomfortable; but I am not aware that it made any sinners better, or any wretched happy. Peter of Alcantara is her admiration; he who for forty years never slept more than one hour and a half in the twenty-four, and then in a sitting posture, with his head against a wooden peg in the wall; who ate in general only every third day; and who looked, she says, as if he were made of the roots of trees (*hecho de reyes de arboles*⁸). Lodged in her monastic cranny of creation, she convulses herself with useless fervours, absolutely ignorant of all things and persons non-ecclesiastical. Her highest ambition is to reduce the too-palpable reality of herself to the minutest possible compass, and to hide herself—a kind of parasitical insect or entozoön—in the personality of her confessor. Yet, complete as is this suicide, she is never sure that she is sufficiently dead, and incessantly asks him if *he* is quite sure that she is sincere. Such a life is an object of compassion more than blame. She was herself the victim of the wicked system to which her name was to impart a new impulse. The spasmodic energy she at last displays about her Reformation is not native strength. She was surrounded from the first by

⁸ *Vida*, cap. xxvii. p. 196.

those who saw clearly what Rome needed at that time, who beheld in her first almost accidental effort the germ of what they desired, and in herself a fit instrument. A whisper from one of these guides would be translated by such an imagination into a direct commission from heaven. They had but to touch a spring, and her excitable nature was surrounded with the phantasmagoria of vision; one scene produced another, and that unfolded into more—all, the reiteration and expansion of the bent once given to her fixed idea.

Theresa experienced her first rapture while reciting the *Veni Creator*, when she heard these words spoken in the interior of her heart—‘I will have thee hold converse, not with men, but angels.’⁹ She had been conscious, on several previous occasions, of supernatural excitements in prayer, and was much perplexed thereby, as indeed were several of her confessors. Here were irresistible devotional seizures for which they had no rule ready. They suspected an evil spirit, advised a struggle against such extraordinary influences. But the more she resists, the more does the Lord cover her with sweetnesses and glories, heap on her favours and caresses. At last the celebrated Francis Borgia comes to Avila. The Jesuit bids her resist no more; and she goes on the mystical way rejoicing. The first rapture took place shortly after her interviews with the future General of the Society of Jesus.

A word on this system of spiritual directorship. It is the vital question for mystics of the Romish communion. Nowhere is the duty of implicit self-surrender to the director or confessor more constantly inculcated than in the writings of Theresa and John of the Cross, and nowhere are the inadequacy and mischief of the principle more apparent. John warns the mystic that his only safeguard against delusion lies in perpetual and unreserved appeal to his director. Theresa tells us that

⁹ *Vida*, cap. xxiv. p. 171.

whenever our Lord commanded her in prayer to do anything, and her confessor ordered the opposite, the Divine guide enjoined obedience to the human ; and would influence the mind of the confessor afterwards, so that he was moved to counsel what he had before forbidden !¹⁰ Of course. For who knows what might come of it if enthusiasts were to have visions and revelations on their own account ? The director must draw after him these fiery and dangerous natures, as the lion-leaders of an Indian pageantry conduct their charge, holding a chain and administering opiates. The question between the orthodox and the heterodox mysticism of the fourteenth century was really one of theological doctrine. The same question in the sixteenth and seventeenth was simply one of ecclesiastical interests.¹¹ The condemned quietists were merely mystics imperfectly subservient—unworkable raw material, and as such flung into the fire. Out of the very same substance, duly wrought and fashioned, might have come a saint like Theresa. By the great law of Romish policy, whatever cannot be made to contribute to her ornament or defence is straightway handed over to the devil. Accordingly, the only mysticism acknowledged by that Church grows up beneath her walls, and invigorates, with herbs of magic potency, her garrison,—resembles the strip of culture about some eastern frontier town, that does but fringe with green the feet of the ramparts ; all the panorama beyond, a wilderness ;—for Bedouin marauders render tillage perilous and vain. Thus, O mystic, not a step beyond that shadow ; or hell's black squadrons, sweeping down, will carry thee off captive to their home of dolour !

¹⁰ *Vida*, cap. xxvi. p. 186. Siempre que el Señor me mandava alguna cosa en la oracion, si el confessor me dezia otra, me tornava el Señor a dezir que le obedeciese : despues su Magestad

e bolvia para que me lo tornasse a mandar. She speaks in the very same page of bad advice given her by one of her confessors.

¹¹ See Note on p. 164.

The confessions of Theresa are a continual refutation of her counsels. She acknowledges that she herself had long and grievously suffered from the mistakes of her early directors. She knew others also who had endured much through similar incompetency. The judgment of one conductor was reversed by his successor. She exhorts her nuns to the greatest care in the selection of a confessor,—on no account to choose a vain man or an ignorant. She vindicates their liberty to change him when they deem it desirable.¹² John of the Cross, too, dilates on the mischief which may be done by an inexperienced spiritual guide. At one time Theresa was commanded to make the sign of the cross when Christ manifested Himself to her, as though the appearance had been the work of some deceiving spirit.¹³ Her next guide assured her that the form she beheld was no delusion. Dreadful discovery, yet joyful! She had attempted to exorcise her Lord; but the virtue of obedience had blotted out the sin of blasphemy. Thus does each small infallibility mould her for his season, and then pass her on to another. Her soul, with despair stamped on one side and glory imaged on the other, spins dizzy in the air; and whether, when it comes down, heaven or hell shall be uppermost, depends wholly upon the twist of the ecclesiastical thumb.

But to return to her marvellous relations; and, first of all, to those of the infernal species. On one occasion, she tells us, she was favoured with a brief experience of the place she merited in hell:—a kind of low oven, pitch dark, miry, stinking, full of vermin, where sitting and lying were alike impossible; where the walls seemed to press in upon the sufferer—crushing, stifling, burning; where in solitude the lost nature is its own tormentor, tearing itself in a desperate misery, inter

¹² *Vida*, p. 85; *Camino de Perfeccion*, capp. 4 and 5.

¹³ *Vida*, cap. xxix., p. 209.

minable, and so intense, that all she had endured from rack-ing disease was delightful in comparison.¹⁴

At another time, while smitten for five hours together with intolerable pains, the Lord was pleased to make her understand that she was tempted by the devil; and she saw him at her side like a very horrible little negro, gnashing his teeth at her. At last she contrived to sprinkle some holy water on the place where he was. That moment he and her pains vanished together, and her body remained as though she had been severely beaten. It is as well to know that holy water will be found incomparably your best weapon in such cases. The devils will fly from the cross, but may presently return. The drops the Church has blest, do their business effectually. Two nuns, who came into the room after the victory just related, snuffed up the air of the apartment with manifest disgust, and complained of a smell of brimstone. Once the sisters heard distinctly the great thumps the devil was giving her, though she, in a 'state of recollection,' was unconscious of his belabouring. The said devil squatted one day on her breviary, and at another time had all but strangled her.¹⁵ She once saw, with the eye of her soul, two devils, encompassing, with their meeting horns, the neck of a sinful priest; and at the funeral of a man who had died without confession, a whole swarm of devils tearing and tossing the body and sporting in the grave.

But much more numerous, though as gross as these, are her visions of celestial objects. 'Being one day in prayer,' she tells us, 'our Lord was pleased to show me his sacred hands, of excessive and indescribable beauty; afterwards his divine face, and finally, at mass, all his most sacred humanity.' At one of his appearances, he drew out with his right hand, the nail which transfixed his left, some of the flesh following it. Three times did she behold in her raptures the most sublime

¹⁴ *Vida*, cap. xxxii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, cap. xxxi.

of all visions—the humanity of Christ in the bosom of the Father; very clear to her mind, but impossible to explain. While reciting the Athanasian Creed the mystery of the Trinity was unfolded to her, with unutterable wonderment and comfort. Our Lord paid her, one day, the compliment of saying, that if He had not already created heaven, He would have done so for her sake alone.¹⁶

Some of her ‘Memorable Relations’ are among the most curious examples on record of the materialization of spiritual truth. With all the mystics, she dwells much on the doctrine of Christ in us. But while some of them have exaggerated this truth till they bury under it all the rest, and others have authenticated by its plea every vagary of special revelation, in scarcely any does it assume a form so puerile and so sensuous as with St. Theresa. Repeatedly does she exhort religious persons to imagine Christ as actually within the interior part of their soul. The superstition of the mass contributed largely in her case to render this idea concrete and palpable. In a hymn, composed in a rapturous inspiration after swallowing the consecrated wafer, she describes God as her prisoner¹⁷ She relates in the following passage how she saw the figure of Christ in a kind of internal looking-glass.

‘When reciting the hours one day with the nuns, my soul suddenly lapsed into a state of recollection, and appeared to me as a bright mirror, every part of which, back and sides, top and bottom, was perfectly clear. In the centre of this was represented to me Christ our Lord, as I am accustomed to see him. I seemed to see him in all the parts of my soul also,

¹⁶ *Vida*, pp. 198, 301, 209, 321. This last communication is not related by herself: we have it on the authority of Ribadeneira :—Itidem ei rursus ap-

parens dixit : Cœlum nisi creassem, ob te solam crearem.—*Vita Teresiæ*, p. 41.

¹⁷ Mas causa en mí tal passion
Ver à Dios mí prisionero
Que muero porque no muero.

distinctly as in a mirror, and at the same time this mirror (I do not know how to express it) was all engraven in the Lord himself, by a communication exceeding amorous which I cannot describe. I know that this vision was of great advantage to me, and has been every time I have called it to mind, more especially after communion. I was given to understand, that when a soul is in mortal sin, this mirror is covered with a great cloud, and grows very dark, so that the Lord cannot be seen or represented in us, though he is always present as the Author of our being. In heretics, this mirror is as it were broken, which is much worse than to have it obscured.¹⁸

Here the *simplicitas* and *nuditas* of other mystics become a kind of concrete crystal, inhabited by a divine miniature. In a Clara de Montfaucon, this sensuous supra-naturalism goes a step further, and good Catholics read with reverence, how a Lilliputian Christ on the cross, with the insignia of the passion, was found, on a *post-mortem* examination, completely formed inside her heart.¹⁹

Similar in its character was a vision with which Theresa was sometimes favoured, of a pretty little angel, with a golden dart, tipped with fire, which he thrust (to her intolerable pain) into her bowels, drawing them out after it, and when thus eviscerated, she was inflamed with a sweet agony of love to God.²⁰

A multitude more of such favours might be related :—how

¹⁸ *Vida*, cap. xl. p. 324

¹⁹ The biographers of the saints differ both as to the time of her death (1308, 1299, 1393, are dates assigned), and as to the number and nature of the miraculous formations discovered within her heart. Ribadeneira's account is by no means the most extravagant. He says :—*Aperto ejus corde amplo et concavo, eidem reppererunt impressa Dominicæ passionis insignia, nempe crucifixum cum tribus clavis, lancea, spongia, et arundine hinc, et*

illinc flagris, virgis, columna, corona spinea ; atque hæc insignia Dominicæ Passionis, nervis validis durisque constabant.—*Vida S. Clare*, p. 161.

²⁰ *Vida*, cap. xxix, p. 213. Speaking of the delicious anguish, she says :—*No es dolor corporal, sino espiritual, aunque no dexa de participar el cuerpo algo, y aun harto. Es un requiebro tan suave que passa entre el alma y Dios que suplico yo a su bondad lo dè a gustar a quien pensare que miento.*

the Lord gave her a cross of precious stones—a matchless specimen of celestial jewellery to deck his bride withal; how, after communion one day, her mouth was full of blood, that ran out over her dress, and Christ told her it was his own—shed afresh, with great pain, to reward her for the gratification her devotion had afforded him; how (doubtless in imitation of Catherine of Siena) she saw and heard a great white dove fluttering above her head; and how, finally, she repays the attentions of the Jesuit Borgia, by repeated praises of the Order; by recording visions of Jesuits in heaven bearing white banners,—of Jesuits, sword in hand, with resplendent faces, gloriously hewing down heretics; and by predicting the great things to be accomplished through the zeal of that body.²¹ Enough!

²¹ *Vida*, cap. xxxviii. pp. 300, 301; and xl. 328.

NOTE TO PAGE 159.

The dispute which agitated the Romish Church for more than half a century (1670-1730), concerning the *Mística Ciudad de Dios*, attributed to Maria d'Agreda, furnishes a striking instance in proof of the character here ascribed to the controversies of the period. This monstrous book was given to the world as the performance of a Spanish nun, at the dictation of the Virgin, or of God;—both assertions are made, and the difference is not material. Its object is to establish, by pretended special revelation, all the prerogatives assigned to the Queen of Heaven, on the basis of her Immaculate Conception. It is replete with the absurdities and indecencies of prurient superstition. Dufresnoy applies to it, with justice, the words of John of Salisbury,—‘Erumpit in apudens et in facie erubescensium populorum genialis thori revelat et denudat arcana.’ It states that the embryo of the Virgin was formed on a Sunday, seventeen days before the ordinary time,—relates how, at eighteen months, the infant demands a nun’s habit from St. Anna, of the colour worn by the Franciscans,—how she sweeps the house, and has nine hundred angels to wait upon her. The partizans of the book maintained, not only that the work itself was a miracle from beginning to end, but that its translation was miraculous also,—a French nun receiving instantaneously the gift of the Spanish tongue, that these disclosures from heaven might pass the Pyrenees. Such was the mass of corruption about which the gadflies and the ‘shard-borne beetles’ of the Church settled in contending swarms. This was the book on whose wholesomeness for the flock of Christ his Vicars could not venture to decide—eventually, rather evading reply than pronouncing sentence. No such scruple concerning the unwholesomeness of the Bible.

The Abbé Dufresnoy handles the question broadly, but most of the combatants are furious, this side or that, from some small party motive. The

French divines censure the book, for fear it should encourage Quietism—their great bugbear at that time. The Spanish ecclesiastics, jealous of the honour done their countrywoman, retorted with a *Censura Censuræ*. But about the habit the battle was hottest. Every Carmelite must reject the book with indignation, for had they not always believed, on the best authority, that the Virgin wore a dress of *their* colour? The Franciscans again, and the religious of St. Clare, would defend it as eagerly, for did not its pages authorize anew from heaven their beloved ashen hue? Again, did not these revelations represent the Almighty as adopting the Scotist doctrine? On this great question, of course, Scotist and Thomist would fight to the death. Some account of the controversy, and an examination of the book, will be found in Dufresnoy, *Traité Historique et Dogmatique sur les Apparitions, les Visions et les Révélations particulières*, tom. II. chap. xi. (1751).

The same spirit betrays itself in the instance of Molinos. Even after he had written his *Guida Spirituale*, he was patronized by the Jesuits because he had employed his pen against Jansenism, and the Franciscans approved his book, while the Dominicans rejected it, because he had delighted the one party and disgusted the other by speaking somewhat disparagingly of Thomas Aquinas.

CHAPTER II.

Indeed, when persons have been long softened with the continual droppings of religion, and their spirits made timorous and apt for impression by the assiduity of prayer, and perpetual alarms of death, and the continual dyings of mortification,—the fancy, which is a very great instrument of devotion, is kept continually warm, and in a disposition and aptitude to take fire, and to flame out in great ascents ; and when they suffer transportations beyond the burdens and support of reason, they suffer they know not what, and call it what they please.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

I. *Saint Theresa*—(CONTINUED).

WHAT disinterested love is to the mysticism of Fénelon, that is supernatural passive prayer to the mysticism of St. Theresa. She writes to describe her experience in the successive stages of prayer ; to distinguish them, and to lay down directions for those who are their subjects. She professes no method whereby souls may be conducted from the lowest to the highest degree. On the contrary, she warns all against attempting to attain, by their own efforts, that blissful suspension of the powers which she depicts in colours so glowing. Unlike Dionysius, she counsels no effort to denude the soul of thought : she does not, with Tauler, bid the mystic laboriously sink into the ground of his being. She is emphatically a Quietist ; quite as much so as Molinos, far more so than Fénelon. Spiritual consolation and spiritual desertion are to be alike indifferent. By a singular inconsistency, while tracing out the way of perfection, she forbids the taking of a step in that path.¹ You will be borne along, she would say, if

¹ *Vida*, pp. 71 and 75. In the latter passage, Theresa says expressly : —En la mystica Teologia, que comence a dezir, pierde de obrar el entendimiento, porque le suspende Dios, como despues declararé mas, si supiere, y el me diere para el lo su favor. Presumir, ni pensar de suspenderle nosotros, es lo que digo no se haga, ni se dexé de obrar con el, porque nos quedaremos bouos y frios, y ni haremos lo uno ni lo otro. Que quando el Señor le suspende, y haze parar, dale de que se espante, y en que se ocupe, y que sin discurrir entienda mas en un credo que nosotros podemos entender con todas nuestras diligencias de tierra en muchos años.

you wait, as far as is fitting. Her experience receives its complexion, and some of her terminology is borrowed from the *Lives of the Saints*. Of the past career of Mystical Theology she is utterly ignorant. She hears, indeed, of a certain time-honoured division of the mystical process into Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive ; but she does not adopt the scheme. The Platonic and philosophic element is absent altogether from her mysticism. Her metaphysics are very simple :—the soul has three powers—Understanding, Memory, and Will. Now one, now another, now all of these, are whelmed and silenced by the incoming flood of Divine communication.

In addition to sundry chapters in her *Life* on the various kinds of prayer, she has left two treatises, *The Way of Perfection* (*Camino de Perfeccion*) and *The Castle of the Soul* (*Castillo Interior*)—verbose, rambling, full of repetitions. For the conventual mind there is no rotation of crops ; and the barrenness which limits such monotonous reproduction supervenes very soon. From these sources, then, we proceed to a brief summary of her theopathy.

There are in her scale four degrees of prayer. The first is *Simple Mental Prayer*,—fervent, inward, self-withdrawn ; not exclusive of some words, nor unaided by what the mystics called discursive acts, *i.e.*, the consideration of facts and doctrines prompting to devotion. In this species there is nothing extraordinary. No mysticism, so far.

SECOND DEGREE :—*The Prayer of Quiet* called also *Pure Contemplation*. In this state the Will is absorbed, though the Understanding and Memory may still be active in an ordinary way. Thus the nun may be occupied for a day or two in the usual religious services, in embroidering an altar-cloth, or dusting a chapel ; yet without the Will being engaged. That faculty is supposed to be, as it were, bound and taken up in God. This stage is a supernatural one. Those who are conscious of

it are to beware lest they suffer the unabsorbed faculties to trouble them. Yet they should not exert themselves to protract this 'recollection.' They should receive the wondrous sweetness as it comes, and enjoy it while it lasts, absolutely passive and tranquil. The devotee thus favoured often dreads to move a limb, lest bodily exertion should mar the tranquillity of the soul. But happiest are those who, as in the case just mentioned, can be Marys and Marthas at the same time.²

THIRD DEGREE:—*The Prayer of Union*, called also *Perfect Contemplation*. In this prayer, not the Will only, but the Understanding and Memory also, are swallowed up in God. These powers are not absolutely inactive; but we do not work them, nor do we know how they work. It is a kind of celestial frenzy—'a sublime madness,' says Theresa. In such a transport she composed her ecstatic hymn, without the least exercise of the understanding on her part. At this stage the contemplatist neither thinks nor feels as a human being. The understanding is stunned and struck dumb with amazement. The heart knows neither why it loves, nor what. All the functions of the mind are suspended. Nothing is seen, heard, or known. And wherefore this sudden blank? That for a brief space (which seems always shorter than it really is) the Living God may, as it were, take the place of the unconscious spirit—that a divine vitality may for a moment hover above the dead soul, and then vanish without a trace; restoring the mystic to humanity again, to be heartened and edified, perhaps for years to come, by the vague memory of that glorious nothingness.³

Some simple nun might ask, 'How do you know that God did so plenarily enter into you, if you were conscious of nothing whatever?'

² See Note on p. 175.

³ *Vida*, cap. xvii. and *Castillo Interior*, *Moradas Quintas*, cap. i.

‘My daughter,’ replies the saint, ‘I know it by an infallible certainty (*una certidumbre*) that God alone bestows.’⁴

After this nothing remains to be said.

FOURTH DEGREE :—*The Prayer of Rapture, or Ecstasy*. This estate is the most privileged, because the most unnatural of all. The bodily as well as mental powers are sunk in a divine stupor. You can make no resistance, as you may possibly, to some extent, in the Prayer of Union. On a sudden your breath and strength begin to fail; the eyes are involuntarily closed, or, if open, cannot distinguish surrounding objects; the hands are rigid; the whole body cold.

Alas! what shall plain folk do among the rival mystics! Swedenborg tells us that bodily cold is the consequence of defective faith: Theresa represents it as the reward of faith’s most lofty exercise.

Were you reading, meditating, or praying, previous to the seizure, the book, the thought, the prayer, are utterly forgotten. For that troublesome little gnat, the memory (*esta maraposilla importuna de la memoria*), has burnt her wings at the glory. You may look on letters—you cannot read a word; hear speech—you understand nothing. You cannot utter a syllable, for the strength is gone. With intense delight, you find that all your senses are absolutely useless—your spiritual powers inoperative in any human mode. The saint is not quite certain whether the understanding, in this condition, understands; but she is sure that, if it does, it understands without understanding, and that its not understanding cannot be understood. Time of this beatific vacuum,—very long, if half an hour; though obviously a difficult point to decide, as you have no senses to reckon by.

Remarkable were the effects of the rapture on the body of the saint. An irrepressible lifting force seemed to carry her off

⁴ *Castillo Interior*, p. 580.

her feet (they preserve the right foot in Rome to this day): it was the swoop of an eagle; it was the grasp of a giant. In vain, she tells us, did she resist. Generally the head, sometimes the whole body, was supernaturally raised into the air! On one occasion, during a sermon on a high day, in the presence of several ladies of quality, the reckless rapture took her. For in vain had she prayed that these favours might not be made public. She cast herself on the ground. The sisters hastened to hold her down; yet the upward struggling of the divine potency was manifest to all. Imagine the rush of the sisterhood, the screams of the ladies of quality, the pious ejaculations from the congregation,—watching that knot of swaying forms, wrestling with miracle, and the upturned eyes, or open-mouthed amazement, of the interrupted preacher!⁵

The state of rapture is frequently accompanied by a certain ‘great pain’ (*gran pena*), a sweet agony and delicious torment, described by Theresa in language as paradoxical as that which Juliet in her passion applies to the lover who has slain her cousin—

Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feathered raven! wolfish-ravening lamb!

After some two or three hours’ endurance of this combined spiritual and corporeal torture, the sisters would find her almost without pulsation, the bones of the arms standing out (*las canillas muy abiertas*), her hands stiff and extended: in every joint were the pains of dislocation: she was apparently at the point of death.⁶

This mysterious ‘pain’ is no new thing in the history of mysticism. It is one of the trials of mystical initiation. It is the depth essential to the superhuman height. With St. Theresa, the physical nature contributes towards it much more largely than usual; and in her map of the mystic’s progress

⁵ See second Note on p. 175.

⁶ See Note on p. 176.

it is located at a more advanced period of the journey. St. Francis of Assisi lay sick for two years under the preparatory miseries. Catharine of Siena bore five years of privation, and was tormented by devils beside. For five years, and yet again for more than three times five, Magdalena de Pazzi endured such 'aridity,' that she believed herself forsaken of God. Balthazar Alvarez suffered for sixteen years before he earned his extraordinary illumination.⁷ Theresa, there can be little doubt, regarded her fainting-fits, hysteria, cramps, and nervous seizures, as divine visitations. In their action and reaction, body and soul were continually injuring each other. The excitement of hallucination would produce an attack of her disorder, and the disease again foster the hallucination. Servitude, whether of mind or body, introduces maladies unknown to freedom. Elephantiasis and leprosy—the scourge of modern Greece—were unknown to ancient Hellas. The cloister breeds a family of mental distempers, elsewhere unheard of.

The mystics generally, from Dionysius downward, inculcate earnest endeavours to denude the mind of images, to suspend its reflex or discursive operations. Theresa goes a step farther, and forbids her pupils to strive towards such a state. If such a favour is to be theirs, it will be wrought in them as by enchantment. Passivity here reaches its extreme. On this ground a charge of Quietism might have been brought against Theresa with more justice than against Fénélon, or even Molinos. The *Guida Spirituale* of Molinos was designed to assist the mystic in attaining that higher contemplation of God which rises above the separate consideration of particular attributes. This indistinct and dazzled apprehension of all the perfections together is the very characteristic of Theresa's *Prayer of Rapture*. Molinos cites her very words. The introduction to his con-

⁷ See Note on p. 177.

demned manual contains some very strong expressions. But nothing of his own is so extravagant as the passages from Dionysius and Theresa.

Who then is the Quietist—Molinos or Theresa? Both write books to mark out the mystic's pathway. Theresa adds the caution, 'Sit still.' Manifestly, then, the excess of passivity lies with her. The oars of Molinos are the sails of Theresa,—erected, like the broad paddles of the Indian, to catch the breeze, and urge onward the canoe without an effort.⁸ But the followers of Molinos were found guilty of neglecting ceremonial gewgaws for devout abstraction,—of escaping those vexatious observances so harassing to patients and so lucrative to priests. So Rome condemned him, and not Theresa, as the Quietist heretic. For his head the thundercloud; for hers the halo.⁹

Here the reader may naturally ask, 'How do these mystics reconcile such extremes of abstraction and such extremes of sensuousness? If the state above symbols and above reasoning—above all conscious mental operations, distinctions, or figures, be so desirable (as they all admit),—must not crucifixes, images, and pictures of saints, yea, the very conception of our Saviour's humanity itself, be so many hindrances?'

To this Theresa would answer, 'I thought so once. But I was happily led to see my error ere long. In the *Prayer of Rapture*, all recognition of Christ's humanity—as, indeed, of everything else—is doubtless obliterated. But, then, *we* do not effect this. There is no effort on our part to remove from our minds the conception of Christ's person. The universal nescience of Rapture is supernaturally wrought, without will of

⁸ See Note on p. 178.

⁹ See the account of the proceedings against Molinos and his followers, in Arnold, th. III., c. xvii., and more

fully in an Appendix to the English translation of Madame Guyon's Autobiography.

ours.¹⁰ John of the Cross, who carries his negative, imageless abstraction so far, is fain (as a good son of the Church) to insert a special chapter in commendation of images, pictures, and the sensuous aids to devotion generally. It was unfortunate for the flesh and blood of Molinos that he failed to do the same.¹¹

In the seventeenth century the Quietists were accused of rejecting the idea of Christ's humanity, as a corporeal image which would only mar their supersensuous contemplation of abstract deity. Bossuet attempted to fasten the charge on Fénelon : it was one of the hottest points of their controversy. Fénelon completely clears himself. From the evidence within my reach, I am disposed to acquit Molinos also.¹²

Theresa relates with peculiar pleasure those passages in the marvellous history of the soul in which surpassing heights of knowledge, or of virtue, are supposed to be realized, on the instant, without processes or media. No transition is too

¹⁰ *Vida*, chap. xxii. :—Quando Dios quiere suspender todas las potencias (como en los modos de oracion que quedan dichos hemos visto) claro está que aunque no queramos se quita esta presencia. . . . Mas que nosotros de maña y con cuydado nos acostumbremos a no procurar con todas nuestras fuerças traer delante siempre (y pluguiesse al Señor fuesse siempre) esta sacratissima humanidad esto digo que no me parece bien, y que es andar el alma en ayre, como dizen : porque parece no trae arrimo, por mucho que la parezca anda llena de Dios.—P. 154.

¹¹ The words of John are :—Mais il faut remarquer que quand je dis qu'il est à propos d'oublier les espèces et les connaissances des objets matériels, je ne prétends nullement parler de Jésus-Christ ni de son humanité sacrée. Quoique l'âme n'en ait pas quelquefois la mémoire dans sa plus haute contemplation et dans le simple regard de la divinité, parceque Dieu élève l'esprit à

cette connaissance confuse et surnaturelle, néanmoins il ne faut jamais négliger exprès la représentation de cette adorable humanité ni en effacer le souvenir ou l'idée, ni en affaiblir la connaissance.—*La Montée du Mont Carmel*, liv. iii. chap. i. I have used the French translation of his works, edited by the Abbé Migne, in his *Bibliothèque Universelle du Clergé*. 1845.

The chapter on images is the fourteenth of the same book.

Father Berthier (*Lettres sur les Œuvres de S. Jean de la Croix*) attempts to show the difference between the mysticism of his author and that of the false mystics. He succeeds only in pointing out a manifest disagreement between the opinions of John and those which he himself believes (or pretends to believe) are those of Quietism—the accusations, in fact, against the Quietists—the exaggerated conclusions drawn by their enemies.

¹² See Note on p. 180.

violent for her faith. She is impatient of all natural growth; will acknowledge no conditions of development. The sinner turns into a seraph in the twinkling of an eye. The splendid symmetry of all the Christian virtues can arise, like the palace of Aladdin, in a single night. In one particular kind of Rapture—the Flight of the Soul (*Bucló del Espíritu*), the soul is described by her as, in a manner, blown up. It is discharged heavenwards by a soundless but irresistible explosive force from beneath, swift as a bullet (*con la presteza que sale la pelota de un arcabuz*). Thus transported the spirit is taught without the medium of words, and understands mysteries which long years of search could not even have surmised.¹³

Visions are intellectual or representative. The former is a consciousness of spiritual proximity, indescribable, unaccompanied by any appearances. The representative or imaginative vision, presents some definite form or image.¹⁴

There is a kind of supernatural tuition, she tells us, in which the Lord suddenly places in the centre of the soul, what he wishes it to understand, without words or representation of any kind. This privilege Theresa compares very truly to an ability to read without having learnt letters, or to nutriment derived from food without eating it.¹⁵ In other instances

¹³ *Castillo Interior. Morada vi.*, c. v.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, capp. viii., ix., x.

¹⁵ *Vida*, cap. xxvii., pp. 191, &c. Here the supernatural illumination without means or mode, longed for by so many mystics, is professedly realised. Molinos puts forward no claim so dangerous as this special revelation. Theresa is confident that this most inexplicable species of communication is beyond the reach of any delusion, and inaccessible altogether to the father of lies. Her language concerning the absolute passivity of those who are its subjects, is as strong as it could be. No Quietist could push it farther. It so happens that the saint, in his chap-

ter, contravenes expressly the three criteria, afterwards laid down by Fénelon, to distinguish the true mysticism from the false. The genuine contemplation according to him is not purely infused, not purely gratuitous (*i.e.*, without correspondence on the part of the soul to the grace vouchsafed), not miraculous. With Theresa this form of passive contemplation is all three. So much more Quietist was the mysticism authorised than the mysticism condemned by Rome. See *Maximes des Saints*, art. xxix. What Fénelon rejects in the following section as false, answers exactly to the position of Theresa. Fénelon supports his more refined and

certain efficacious words (the 'substantial words' of John), are spoken divinely in the centre of the soul, and immediately produce there the actual effects proper to their significance.¹⁶ If something is thus inwardly spoken about humility, for example, the subject of such words is that moment completely humble. So the soul is supplied with virtues as the *tables volantes* of Louis XV. with viands,—a spring is touched, and presto! the table sinks and re-appears—spread.

sober mysticism by the authority of preceding mystics. He finds among them ample credentials, and indeed more than he wants. Their extravagances he tacitly rejects. Not that, as a good Catholic, he could venture openly to impugn their statements, but

their fantastic extremes, and choice wonders, find a place with him rather as so much religious tradition, or extraordinary history, than as forming any essential part of the mysticism he himself represents and commends.

¹⁶ *Vida*, cap. xxv.

NOTE TO PAGE 168.

Theresa compares the four degrees of prayer to four ways of watering the soul-garden : the first, to drawing water out of a well ; the second, to raising it by means of a rope with buckets (less laborious and more plentiful) ; the third, to the introduction of a rivulet ; and the fourth, to a copious shower, whereby God Himself abundantly waters the garden, without any effort of ours.—Cap. xi. p. 67. The second degree is fully described in the fourteenth chapter of her life, and in the thirty-first of the *Camino de Perfeccion*.

The difference between the first degree and the three others is simply that generic distinction between Meditation and Contemplation with which the earlier mystics have made us familiar. Theresa's second, third, and fourth degrees of prayer are her more loose and practical arrangement of the species of contemplation. She identifies Mystical Theology with Prayer, employing the latter term in a very comprehensive sense. So also does St. Francis de Sales :—En somme, l'oraison et théologie mystique n'est autre chose qu'une conversation par laquelle l'âme s'entretient amoureusement avec Dieu de sa très-aimable bonté pour s'unir et joindre à icelle.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, livre vi. chap. i. He likens the soul in the prayer of Quiet when the will is engaged but the other powers free, to an infant which can see and hear and move its arms, while adhering to the breast. The babe which removes its little mouth from the bosom to see where its feet are, resembles those who are distracted in the prayer of Quiet by self-consciousness, and disturb their repose by curiosity as to what the mind is doing the while.—*Ibid.* chap. x.

NOTE TO PAGE 170.

Vida, capp. xviii. xix.:—Estandoassi el alma buscando a Dios, siente con un deleyte grandissimo y suave casi desfallecerse toda con una manera de desmayo, que le va faltando el huelgo, y todas las fuerças corporales, demanera que sino es con mucha pena, no puede aun menear las manos ; los ojos se le cierran sin querer, los cerrar, y si los tiene abiertos no vee casi nada ; ni si lee, acierta a dezir letra ni

casi atina a conocerla bien ; vee que ay letra, mas como el entendimiento no ayuda, no sabe leer, aunque quiera. Oye, mas no entiende lo que oye. Assi que de los sentidos no se aprovecha nada, sino es para no la acabar de dexar a su plazer, y assi antes la dañan. Hablar, es por de mas, que no atina a formar palabra, ni ay fuerça ya que atinasse, para poderla pronunciar : porque toda la fuerça exterior se pierde, y se aumenta en las del alma, para mejor poder gozar de su gloria. El deleyte exterior que se siente es grande, y muy conocido.—P. 118.

As to the elevation of the body in the air during rapture, it is common enough in the annals of Romish saintship, and a goodly page might be filled with the mere names of the worthies who are represented as overcoming not only sin, but gravitation. Maria d'Agreda was seen, times without number, poised on nothing in a recumbent attitude, in an equilibrium so delicate, that by blowing, even at a distance, she was made to waft this way or that, like a feather. Dominic of Jesu Maria had the honour of being blown about, while in this soap-bubble condition, by the heretic-slaying breath of Philip II. Görres furnishes a long list of examples, and believes them all ; *Die Christliche Mystik*, Buch. v. iv. § 2.

It is curious to see how Francis de Sales, who follows Theresa somewhat closely in his chapter on the Prayer of Quietude, grows wisely cautious as he treats of Rapture, softens down extravagance, avoids theurgy, and keeps to piety, and admirably substitutes practical devotion for the unintelligibility and the materialism of the Spanish saint. He enumerates three kinds of Rapture or ecstasy (*ravissement* and *extase* are identical),—that of the intellect, that of the affection, and that of action,—manifested, respectively, by glory, by fervour, and by deed,—realized by admiration, by devotion, and by operation. On the last he dwells most fully ; on that he concentrates all his exhortations. To live without profaneness, he says, without falsehood, without robbery, to honour parents, to obey law, to reverence God,—this is to live according to the natural reason of man. But to embrace poverty, to hail reproach and persecution as blessings, and martyrdom as joy, by unceasing self-renunciation, to forsake the world, surmount its opinion, deny its rule,—this is to live, not humanly, but superhumanly ;—to live out of ourselves and above ourselves, by supernatural energy,—this is to enjoy the noblest ecstasy, not of a moment, but of a life-time. Many saints have died without enjoying ecstatic trance—all have lived the ecstatic life.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, livre vii. chapp. iii. and vii.

NOTE TO PAGE 170.

This pain is described by Theresa in the twentieth chapter of the *Life*, and in the *Castillo Interior, Morada*, vi. capp. 1 and 2. In the former place she gives a kind of rationale thereof, in the following words :—Parece me que esta assi el alma, que ni del cielo le viene consuelo, ni esta en el ; ni de la tierra le quiere, ni esta en ella ; sino como crucificada entre el cielo y la tierra, padeciendo sin venirle socorro di ningun cabo. Porque el que le viene del cielo (que es como he dicho una noticia de Dios tan admirable, muy sobre todo lo que podemos dessear) es para mas tormento, porque acreciento el desseo de manera que a mi parecer la gran pena algunas vezes quita el sentido, sino que dura poco sin el. Parecen unos transitos de la meurte, salvo que trae consigo un tan contento este padecer, que no se yo a que lo comparar.—P. 135.

The *Castillo Interior* describes the mystic's progress under the emblem of a Castle, divided into seven apartments ; the inmost, where God resides, representing the centre of the soul (termed the *apex* by some ; the *Ground* by others) ; and each of these successive abodes, from the outermost to the central, corresponding to the advancing stages of discipline and privilege through which the

mystic passes. The liability to the pain in question supervenes at the sixth apartment, prior to the last and most glorious stage attainable on earth.

Victor Gelenius of Treves (writing 1646) has seven degrees, and places this stage of misery and privation in the fourth, as the transition between the human and superhuman kinds of devotion. It is the painful weaning-time, wherein the soul passes (in an agony of strange bewilderment) from a religion which employs the faculties we possess, to that which is operated in us in a manner altogether incomprehensible and divine. Whatever division be adopted, such alone is the legitimate locality for this portion of the mystical experience. Here Gelenius and John of the Cross are perfectly agreed, though their graduation and nomenclature are different.

NOTE TO PAGE 171.

This pain is the 'pressura interna' of Tauler: the 'horrible et indicibile tormentum' of Catharine of Genoa; the 'purgatory' of Thomas à Jesu; the 'languor infernalis' of Harphius; the 'terrible martyrium' of Maria Vela, the Cistercian; the 'divisio naturæ ac spiritus' of Barbanson; the 'privation worse than hell' of Angela de Foligni. See Card. Bona's *Via Compendii ad Deum*, cap. 10. *Angelæ de Fulgino Visiones*, cap. xix.

These sufferings are attributed by the mystics to the surpassing nature of the truths manifested to our finite faculties (as the sun-glare pains the eye),—to the anguish involved in the surrender of every ordinary religious support or enjoyment, when the soul, suspended (as Theresa describes it) between heaven and earth, can derive solace from neither,—to the intensity of the aspirations awakened, rendering those limitations of our condition here which detain us from God an intolerable oppression,—and to the despair by which the soul is tried, being left to believe herself forsaken by the God she loves.

On this subject John of the Cross and Theresa are most extravagant. In contrast with their folly stands the good sense of Fénelon. The middle ground is occupied by the comparative moderation of Francis de Sales. The privation described by John is preparatory to a state of complete de-humanization, in which we shall know, feel, do, nothing in the mortal manner, as our whole nature suffers a divine transformation. The privation of which Fénelon speaks is simply a refining process, to purify our love more thoroughly from self. The causes and the various species of this pain are detailed at length by John of the Cross in the *Nuit Obscure*, liv. ii. chapp. v. vi. vii.

De Sales says, speaking of the 'blessure d'amour':—Mais, Theotrine, parlant de l'amour sacré, il y a en la pratique d'iceluy une sorte de blesseure que Dieu luy-meme faict quelquesfois pour sa souveraine bonté, comme la pressant et sollicitant de l'aymer; et lors elle s'eslance de force comme pour voler plus haut vers son divin object; mais demeurant courte parce qu'elle ne peut pas tant aymer comme elle desire, o Dieu! elle sent un douleur qui n'a point d'esgale. . . . La voilà donc rudement tourmentée entre la violence de ses esclans et celle de son impuissance.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vi. ch. xiii.

Theresa declares that the intensity of this delicious agony is such as frequently to endanger life.—*Castillo Int.* vi. c. xi.

Francis de Sales, in whom the sufferings in question assume a highly sentimental character, adduces instances in which they proved fatal. The soul, springing forward to obey the attraction of the Well-beloved, sooner than be detained by the body amid the miseries of this life, tears herself away, abandons it, and mounts alone, like a lovely little dove, to the bosom of her celestial spouse. St. Theresa herself, he says, made it known, after her departure, that she died of an impetuous assault of love, too violent for nature to sustain.—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vii. chapp x.-xii.

We may contrast the obscure and feverish utterances of Theresa, and the amorous phraseology of De Sales, on this topic, with the lucid and cautious language of Fénelon

La sainte indifférence, qui n'est jamais que le désintéressement de l'amour, devient dans les plus extrêmes épreuves ce que les saints mystiques ont nommé abandon, c'est-à-dire, que l'âme désintéressée s'abandonne totalement et sans réserve à Dieu pour tout ce qui regarde son intérêt propre ; mais elle ne renonce jamais ni à aucune des choses qui intéressent la gloire et le bon plaisir du bien-aimé. . . . Cette abnégation de nous-mêmes n'est que pour l'intérêt propre, et ne doit jamais empêcher l'amour désintéressé que nous nous devons à nous-mêmes comme au prochain, pour l'amour de Dieu. Les épreuves extrêmes où cet abandon doit être exercé sont les tentations par lesquelles Dieu jaloux veut purifier l'amour, en ne lui faisant voir aucune ressource ni aucune espérance pour son intérêt même éternel. Ces épreuves sont représentées par un très grand nombre des saints comme un purgatoire terrible, qui peut exempter du purgatoire de l'autre vie les âmes qui le souffrent avec une entière fidélité. . . . Ces épreuves ne sont que pour un temps. Plus les âmes y sont fidèles à la grâce pour se laisser purifier de tout intérêt propre par l'amour jaloux, plus ces épreuves sont courtes. C'est d'ordinaire la résistance secrète des âmes à la grâce sous des beaux prétextes, c'est leur effort intéressé et empressé pour retenir les appuis sensibles dont Dieu veut les priver, qui rend leurs épreuves si longues et si douloureuses : car Dieu ne fait point souffrir sa créature pour la faire souffrir sans fruit, ce n'est que pour la purifier et pour vaincre ses résistances.—*Explic. des Maximes des Saints*, Art. VIII.

NOTE TO PAGE 172.

See the passage already cited (page 166, note), where Theresa expressly forbids any attempt on our part to suspend the powers of the mind. Effort to produce inaction appears to her a contradiction in terms. Yet such effort Dionysius expressly enjoins ; and, indeed, without it, how can the swarming words or images that float about the mind be excluded ? The 'phantasmata irruentia,' to be barred out, are the images of sensible objects, according to the old theory of perception—the 'imagines rerum sensibilium et corporearum.' Bona expresses the spirit of the old Platonist mysticism in the Romish Church, when he says, 'Hæc omnia abdicanda et extirpanda prorsus sunt, ut Deum inveniamus.'—*Via Compendii ad Deum*, p. 26. Theresa is quite agreed with all the mystics as to the previous heart-discipline, and the ascetic process essential to the higher forms of contemplation.

The mystics generally rank the 'contemplatio caliginosa' much above the 'contemplatio pura : ' the more indistinct our apprehensions, the more divine. John of the Cross comes next, in this respect, after Dionysius. Molinos borrows his doctrine, that as the distance between the Infinite and all our sensuous images, conclusions, and finite conceptions must be infinite after all, such things embarrass rather than aid our contemplation. But even he does not soar into a darkness so absolute as that of Dionysius. He says expressly, in the introduction to his *Spiritual Guide* :—' In answer to the objection that the will must be inactive where no clear conception is given to the understanding,—that a man cannot love what he can take no cognizance of, my reply is this : Although the understanding does not distinctively recognise certain images and conceptions, by a discursive act or mental conclusion, it apprehends, nevertheless, by a dim and comprehensive faith. And though this knowledge be very cloudy, vague, and general, yet it is far more clear and perfect than any sensuous or scientific apprehensions that man can devise in this life, since all corporeal images must

be immeasurably remote from God.' See Arnold's *Kirchen-und-Ketzergeschichte*, th. III. ch. xvii., where the Introduction is inserted entire.

Theresa also admits that during the ecstatic pain the soul adores no particular attribute of God, but, as it were, all his perfections collectively. Bien entiende que no quiere sino a su Dios, mas no ama cosa particular del, sino todo junto lo quiere, y no sabe lo que quiere.—*Vida*, cap. xx. p. 135. But it is a sore trial to her when her fancy is limed, and the key to her chamber of vision, for a season, lost.

When we leave Dionysius and John, and come to the French mystics, how great the difference! The soul hangs no longer in a lightless void, trembles no more on the verge of swooning ecstasy. This 'Visio caliginosa' becomes, not merely a comprehensible thing, but so clarified, humanized, and we may say Christianized, as to come within the range of every devout consciousness. The 'indistinct contemplation' of St. Francis de Sales is a summary and comprehensive view of Divine truth or the Divine Nature,—simple, emotional, jubilant, as distinguished from the detailed and partial views of searching Meditation. As he fancifully expresses it, this simplicity of contemplation does not pluck the rose, the thyme, the jessamine, the orange-flower, inhaling the scent of each separately,—this the flower-gatherer Meditation does;—Contemplation rejoices in the fragrance distilled from them all. An example perfectly explains his meaning. O que bien-heureux sont ceux qui, après avoir discoursu (the discursive acts above spoken of) sur la multitude des motifs qu'ils ont d'aymer Dieu, reduisans tous leurs regards en une seule veuë et toutes leurs pensées en une seule conclusion, arrestant leur esprit en l'unité de la contemplation, à l'exemple de S. Augustin ou de S. Bruno, prononcant secrettement en leur ame, par une admiration permanente, ces paroles amoureuses: O bonté! bonté! bonté! tousjours ancienne et tousjours nouvelle!—*Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, liv. vi. chap. v.

Every religious man must remember times when he was the subject of some such emotion, when the imagination bodied forth no form, the reason performed no conscious process, but, after some train of thought, at the sight of some word, or while gazing on some scene of beauty, an old truth seemed to overwhelm him (as though never seen till then) with all its grandeur or endearment,—times when he felt the poverty of words, and when utterance, if left at all, could only come in the fervid, broken syllables of reiterated ejaculation. In such melting or such tumult of the soul, there is no mysticism. Even Deism, in a susceptible Rousseau, cannot escape this passion. He speaks of a bewildering ecstasy awakened by nature, which would overcome him with such force, that he could but repeat, in almost delirious transport, 'O Great Being! O Great Being!' Neither is it mystical to prefer the kindling masterful impulse of a faith which possesses us, rather than we it, to the frigid exactitude of lifeless prescription. The error of the mystics lay in the undue value they attached to such emotions, and their frequent endeavours to excite them for their own sake; in transferring what was peculiar to those seasons to the other provinces of life; and in the constant tendency of their religionism to underrate the balanced exercise of all our faculties, neglecting knowledge and action in a feverish craving for evanescent fervours.

Fénélon, speaking of the negative character of pure and direct contemplation, teaches a doctrine widely different from that of Dionysius, even while referring with reverence to his name. He is careful to state that the attributes of God do not, at such times, cease to be present to the mind, though no sensible image be there, no discursive act performed; that the essence, without the attributes, would be the essence no longer; that, in the highest contemplation, the truths of revelation do not cease to be admissible to the mind; that the humanity of Christ,

and all his mysteries, may then be distinctly present,—seen simply, lovingly, as faith presents them, only that there is no systematic effort to impress the several details on the imagination, or to draw conclusions from them.—*Explic. des Maximes des Saints*, art. xxvii.

NOTE TO PAGE 173.

See the clear and guarded language of the twenty-eighth article in the *Maximes des Saints*, and the *Troisième Lettre en réponse à divers Ecrits*, *Seconde Partie*.

The language of Molinos on this point is as follows :—‘Although the humanity of Christ is the most perfect and most holy mean of access to God, the highest mean of our salvation, yea the channel through which alone we receive every blessing for which we hope, yet is the humanity not the supreme good, for that consists in the contemplation of God. But as Jesus Christ is what he is more through his divine nature than his human, so that man contemplates Christ continually and thinks of Him, who thinks on God, and hath regard constantly to Him. And this is the case more especially with the contemplative man, who possesses a faith more purified, clear, and experimental.’—*Arnold, loc. cit.*, p. 183.

Such a passage proves merely thus much, that Molinos shared in the general tendency of the authorised mediæval mysticism,—a tendency leading the contemplatist to see Christ in God, rather than God in Christ, and placing him in danger of resolving Redemption into self-loss in the abstract Godhead. Similar expressions are frequent in Tauler, in Ruysbroek, in Suso, in the German theology. Now we know by what these same men say at other times, that it was not their intention to disparage or discard the humanity of Christ. Similar allowance must be made for Molinos—quite as far from such practical Docetism as they were. The words just quoted should be compared with the title of the sixteenth chapter in his first book ; ‘How in the inward recollection, or drawing in of our powers, we may enter into the internal Ground, *through the most holy Humanity of Jesus Christ*.’ A gross and materialised apprehension of the bodily sufferings of the Saviour had become general in the Romish Church. They were dramatized in imagination and in fact, into a harrowing spectacle of physical anguish. The end was lost sight of in the means. To such sensible representations—such excesses of over-wrought sentiment, Molinos was doubtless unfriendly ; and so, also, the more refined and elevated mysticism of that communion has generally been. Molinos is nearer to the spiritual Tauler than to the sensuous Theresa. Where he speaks of passivity and acquiescence in desertion (§ 5), of contemplation (§§ 17, 18), of self-abandonment (§ 30), of the divine vocation and elevation necessary to the attainment of the contemplative heights, where he says that we must not, without the direction of an experienced adviser, seek to raise ourselves from one stage to a higher (§ 24), he does but repeat what the most orthodox mystics had said before him. Holy indifference to spiritual enjoyments and manifestations, and complete passivity, are not more earnestly enjoined by John of the Cross than by Molinos. Yet one main charge against the Quietists was, that they made mysticism a human method, and proposed to raise to mystical perfection all who were ready to go through their process. The accusations brought against Quietism by Berthier in his *Discours sur le Non-Quietisme de S. Theresa*, and in his tenth letter on the works of John of the Cross, are self-destructive. In one place he finds the Quietists guilty of making ‘their pretended spiritual man’ an insensible kind of being, who remains always apathetic—dans une inaltération et une inaction entiere en la présence de Dieu. In another, he represents them as offering to teach contemplation to all (irrespective of the director’s consent, he fears) by

reducing it to a method. Either way the unhappy Quietists cannot escape : they must always do too much or too little. It was against the artificial methods of devotion, so much in vogue, that Molinos protested, when he called his readers away from the puerile manuals and bead-counting of the day, to direct and solitary communion with God. Several of the articles of condemnation are such as would have been drawn out against a man suspected of Protestantism. On the question of the humanity of Christ, the proposition professedly deduced from the doctrines of Molinos, and censured accordingly, runs thus—' We must do no good works of our own motion, and render no homage to Our Lady, the Saints, or Christ's humanity,' &c.—Art. xxxv.

CHAPTER III.

And those that endeavour after so still, so silent, and demure condition of minde, that they would have the sense of nothing there but peace and rest, striving to make their whole nature desolate of all *Animal Figurations* whatsoever, what do they effect but a clear Day, shining upon a barren Heath, that feeds neither Cow nor Horse,—neither Sheep nor Shepherd is to be seen there, but only a waste, silent Solitude, and one uniform parchednesse and vacuity. And yet while a man fancies himself thus wholly divine, he is not aware how he is even then held down by his *Animal Nature*; and that it is nothing but the stillnesse and fixednesse of *Melancholy* that thus abuses him, instead of the true divine Principle.—HENRY MORE.

II. *St. John of the Cross.*

LITTLE John of the Cross—a hero, like Tydeus, small in body, but great in soul—was in the prime of life when Theresa was growing old. Early distinguished by surpassing austerity and zeal, he was selected by the Saint as her coadjutor in the great work of Carmelite reform. The task was no easy one, though sanctioned by the highest spiritual authority. This troculus service—the picking the teeth of the gorged ecclesiastical crocodile—has always been a somewhat delicate and dangerous affair. The great jaws closed with a horrible crash one day on poor Madame Guyon, as she was working away with her solitary bill and the best intentions. On John, too, busy at a little scavenger's work, those jaws had once almost met, and at least knocked him fluttering into a hollow tooth,—in other words, a dark and noisome dungeon at Toledo. But what between St. Theresa's intercession and that of the Mother of God, he is let fly again. Vicar-provincial of Andalusia, he plies his task anew, with admirable intrepidity and self-devotion; courts hatred and opprobrium on every side; flourishes his whip; overturns secularities; and mouses for flaws of

regulation. He succeeds in excavating in every direction spiritual catacombs and mummy-caves, where, swathed up in long rows, the religious dumb and withered line the cloister-walls—motionless—satisfactorily dead. Next to Ignatius Loyola, he was, perhaps, the greatest soul-sexton that ever handled shovel.

John of the Cross obtained this distinctive name through his love of crosses. He was consumed by an insatiable love of suffering. It was his prayer that not a day of his life might pass in which he did not suffer something. Again and again does he exhort the monk, saying—‘Whatsoever you find pleasant to soul or body, abandon ; whatsoever is painful, embrace it.’ ‘Take pains,’ he says, ‘to give your name an ill savour ; burrow deep and deeper under heaped obloquy, and you are safe.’¹ Thus is the odour of sanctity best secured ; and the disguised saint resembles that eastern prince who concealed himself from his pursuers beneath a heap of onions, lest the fragrance of his perfumes should betray him. The man who is truly dead and self-abandoned will not only thus dis-

¹ His exhortations here carry ascetic self-abnegation far beyond the Quietist indifference of Fénelon or Madame Guyon. They were satisfied—he, always, and she throughout her later life—to seek a state of calm, to hail joy or sorrow alike, with the trustful equanimity of perfect resignation. John is too violent—too much enamoured of miseries, to await the will of Providence. His ambition will command events, and make them torments.

‘Au reste, le meilleur moyen, le plus méritoire et le plus propre pour acquérir les vertus ; le moyen, dis-je, le plus sûr pour mortifier la joie, l’espérance, la crainte et la douleur, est de se porter toujours aux choses non pas les plus faciles, mais les plus difficiles ; non pas les plus savoureuses, mais les plus insipides ; non pas les plus agréables, mais les plus désagré-

ables ; non pas à celles qui consolent, mais à celles qui causent de la peine ; non pas aux plus grandes, mais aux plus petites ; non pas aux plus sublimes et aux plus précieuses, mais aux plus basses et aux plus méprisables. Il faut enfin désirer et rechercher ce qu’il y a de pire, et non ce qu’il y a de meilleur, afin de se mettre, pour l’amour de Jésus Christ, dans la privation de toutes les choses du monde, et d’entrer dans l’esprit d’une nudité parfaite.
.

‘Premièrement, il faut que celui qui veut réprimer cette passion tâche de faire les choses qui tournent à son déshonneur, et il aura soin de se faire mépriser aussi par le prochain.

‘Secondement, il dira lui-même et fera dire aux autres les choses qui lui attirent du mépris.’—*Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xiii.

guise his virtues before others ; he will be unconscious of them himself. The whole life of John was an attempt towards a practical fulfilment of such precepts. The party of his enemies gained the upper hand in the chapter, and the evening of his days was clouded by the disgrace of which he was covetous. He passed existence in violent extremes, now gazing with delight on some celestial mirage, swimming in seas of glory that waft him to the steps of the burning throne,—and anon hurled down into the abyss, while vampyre wings of fiends ‘darken his fall, with victory,’ and his heart itself is a seething hell-cauldron, wherein demon talons are the raking fleshhooks.

The piety of John is altogether of the Romanist type. In his doctrine of humility, truth is not to be considered, but expediency,—that is, an edifying display of self-vilification. On his own principles, John ought to have persuaded himself, and assured others, that he was a self-indulgent, pleasure-loving drone,—though perfectly aware of the contrary. St. Paul is content to bid men think of themselves not more highly than they ought to think. John of the Cross is not satisfied unless they think worse than they ought,—unless they think untruly, and labour to put a pious fraud upon themselves. John disturbs the equilibrium of Quietism. There is quite as much self-will in going out of the way of a blessing to seek a misery, as in avoiding a duty for the sake of ease. Many men will readily endure a score of mortifications of their own choosing, who would find it hard to display tolerable patience under a single infliction from a source beyond their control. This extreme of morbid asceticism is more easy, because more brilliant in its little world, than the lowly fortitude of ordinary Christian life. How many women, at this hour, in poverty, in pain, in sorrow of heart, are far surpassing St. Theresa in their self-sacrifice and patience, unseen and unpraised of men.

Banished to the little Convent of Pegnuela, he completed

among the crags of the Sierra Morena his great mystical treatises, *The Obscure Night*, and *The Ascent of Carmel*. He follows in the steps of the Pseudo-Dionysius. He describes the successive denudations of the soul as it passes,—the shadow of itself, into the infinite shade of the Divine Dark.² We have seen how instantaneously Theresa could attain at times this oblivious self-reduction. Her soul falls prostrate, with the ordinary attire of faculties, but rises, stripped of all in a moment. Not more dexterously was the fallen Andrew Fairservice stripped in a twinkling by the Highlanders, so that he who tumbled down a well-clothed, decent serving-man, stood up ‘a forked, uncased, bald-pated, beggarly-looking scarecrow.’ John of the Cross describes with almost scientific method the process of spiritual unclothing,—preaches a series of sermons on the successive removal of each integument,—and perorates on the blessed reduction of the soul to a supernatural state of nature.

The ‘Obscure Night,’ would be the most fitting title for both treatises; for the night of mysticism is their sole subject, and Mount Carmel does but figure as a frontispiece, in compliment to the Order probably. Sundry verses head the works as texts; the first of these, with its exposition, will sufficiently indicate the character of the whole.

En una noche oscura
Con ansias en amores inflamada
¡O dichosa ventura!
Salí sin ser notada
Estando ya mi casa sosegada.

‘’Twas in a darksome night, inflamed with restless love, O fortune full of bliss, I ventured forth unmarked, what time my house was still.’

The Saint interprets his stanza, in substance, as follows:—

² Dioynsius is very clearly followed into his darkness in *La Monté du Carmel*, liv. II. chap. viii.; and his Hier-

archies reappear in *La Nuit Obscure*, liv. II. ch. xii.

Here the soul says, 'I went out unhindered by sensuality or the devil. I went out, that is, of myself—out from my own poor and feeble manner of knowing, loving, and tasting God. I went out, unassisted by any action of my own powers ; while my understanding was wrapped in darkness ; while will and memory were overwhelmed by affliction. I went out, abandoning myself in pure faith to darkness—that is, to the night of my spirit and my natural powers.

'This going forth has crowned me with happiness ; for I have been straightway elevated to operations entirely divine—to most familiar intercourses with God ; in other words, my understanding has passed from a human to a divine condition. Uniting myself to God by this purgation, my knowledge is no longer weak and limited as formerly ; but I know by the divine wisdom, to which I am conjoined.

'My will also has gone out of itself, and become in a sort divine ; for being united to the Divine Love, it does not love any longer by its own former powers, but by the powers of the Divine Spirit. Thus, its acts of love towards the Creator are rendered no more in a human manner.

'My memory is filled with images of heavenly glory. All my powers, in short, and all my affections, are renovated by the Night of the spirit and the despoliation of the old man, in such sort that their very nature seems changed, and they can relish only spiritual and divine delights.'³

Thus, the soul is to resemble the wondrous eastern tree of the old travellers, which by daylight stands leafless and flowerless, but after sundown puts forth countless white blossoms, shining in the darkness like the drops of a silver fountain ; and when the sun is risen again, sheds all its beauty, and stands bare and barren as before. When all our natural powers, slain and buried, lie dead under the midnight ;—then arise, instead

³ *La Nuit Obscure*, liv. II. ch. iv. ; *et passim*.

of them, certain divine substitutes, which will, and love, and know, as the Infinite does, not as men.

The FIRST NIGHT is that of the *Sense*: the long process of vigil and austerity which, with the caduceus of asceticism, tames and lulls to slumber the Argus-eyed monster of the flesh.⁴ A painful work, but not without meet recompence. New pleasures, even of the sense, are supernaturally vouchsafed to the steadfast votary. The wearied eye and the unvisited ear are regaled by glorious visions and seraphic melody; yea, the parched tongue, and haggard, bleeding flesh, are made to know delights of taste and touch, that melt with most delicious pleasure through the frame, and beggar with their transport all the joys of banquets or of love.

But rejoice not, O mystic! for even now, lest thou shouldst grow greedy of these high luxuries, there strides towards thee the darkness of—

The SECOND NIGHT—the Night of the *Spirit*. Here all caresses are withdrawn. The deserted soul cannot think, or pray, or praise, as of old. The great pains are to begin. Piti- less purgation and privation absolute are about to make the second night not night only, but midnight. You seem to descend, God-abandoned, alive into hell. Make no resistance: utter no cry for comfort. Solace is a Tantalus' bough, which will wave itself away as you stretch forth your hand. Acquiesce in all: be in your desertion as absolutely passive as in your rapture. So, from the bright glassy edge and summit of this awful fall, you shoot down helpless, blind, and dizzy,—down

⁴ This first Night is treated of at length in the first book of the *Montée du Carmel*, and in the first of the *Nuit Obscure*. The supernatural sensuous enjoyments, alluded to, are described in the *Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xi. They are placed in the second Night, —the compensation not taking place immediately; and their recipient is on no account to rely on them, or desire

their continuance (p. 444). By 'sense,' John understands, not the body merely, but the least disorder of the passions, and all those imperfections so common to beginners which arise from an undue eagerness for religious enjoyments, such, for example, as what he calls spiritual avarice, spiritual luxury, spiritual *gourmandise*, &c.

through the surging cataract, among the giant vapour columns, amid the eternal roar, to awake at the boiling foot, and find that you yet live, in your tossing shallop,—or rather, you no longer, for you yourself are dead—so much mere ballast in the bottom of the boat: a divine and winged Radiance has taken your place, who animates rather than steers, guiding, in your stead, by mysterious impulse.⁵

To the higher faculty, then, there are already visible, after the first horrors, breaking gleams of a super-celestial dawn. Visions are seen; forms of glory come and go: gifts of subtlest discernment are vouchsafed: substantial words are spoken within, which make you, in that moment, all they mean.⁶

But all such particular and special manifestations you are peremptorily to reject, come they from God or come they from the Devil;—not even to reflect upon and recall them afterwards, lest grievous harm ensue. For the philosophy of John is summary. Two ideas alone have room there—All and Nothing. Whatsoever is created is finite: whether actual or ideal, it bears no proportion to the All,—it cannot therefore be helpful to any on their way to the All. The Something is no link between the opposites of All and Nothing. Therefore, if any view of a particular divine perfection, any conception of Deity, or image of saint or angel, be even supernaturally presented to the mind, reject it. You are aiming at the highest—at loss in the All. Everything definite and particular—all finite apprehension, must be so much negation of the Infinite,—must limit that All. You should pass beyond such things to blend immediately with the Universal,—to attain that view of God which is above means—is unconditioned—is, from its illimitable vastness, an anguish of bliss,—a glory which produces the effect of darkness.⁷

⁵ See Note on p. 195.

⁶ *Montée du Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xxv.-xxxli.
Ibid. ch. viii. and vi.

But why, it will be asked, does God grant these favours of vision to the saints at all, if it is their duty to disregard them?

John answers, 'Because some transition stage is unavoidable. But the higher you attain, the less of such manifestation will you meet with. This portion of your progress is a grand staircase hung with pictures;—hurry up the steps, that you may enter the darkened chamber above, where divine ignorance and total darkness shall make you blest. If in doubt about a vision, there is always your confessor, to whom, if you have not constant resort, woe be to you! But you are safe, at any rate, in not receiving and cherishing such inferior bestowments. To reject them will be no sin—no loss. For the beneficial effects they are designed to produce will be wrought by God internally, if you only abide passive, and refuse to exert about such signs those lower faculties which can only hinder your advance.'⁸

Such a reply is but a fence of words against a serious difficulty. He should be the last to talk of necessary intermediate steps who proclaims the rejection of everything mediate,—who will have the mystic be reduced to the Nothing and rapt to the All, by a single entrancing touch.⁹

But much higher than any visions of the picture-gallery are certain manifestations (sometimes granted in this state) of divine truth in its absolute nakedness. These are glimpses of the *veritas essentialis nude in se ipsa*, beyond all men, and angels, and heavenly splendours, which Tauler bids the mystic long for. John forbids us to seek them—for effort would unseal our

⁸ *Ibid.* ch. xvii. and liv. III. ch. xii.

⁹ What a scope for the indignant eloquence of Bossuet, had Fénelon proclaimed as possible such a sudden equipment with all imaginable virtues as this:—Quelques-unes de ces connaissances et de ces touches intérieures que Dieu répand dans l'âme l'enrichis-

sent de telle sorte qu'une seule suffit, non-seulement pour la délivrer tout d'un coup des imperfections quelle n'avait pu vaincre durant tout le cours de sa vie, mais aussi pour l'orner des vertus chrétiennes et des dons divins. —*Moniée au Carmel*, liv. II. ch. xxvi p. 484.

slumber. They come altogether without consent of ours. Though we are not to hold ourselves so negative towards them as we should towards more palpable and inferior favours.

The Quietists were charged with excluding all human co-operation in the mystical progress. John must plead guilty on this count. His writings abound with reiterated declarations that the soul does absolutely nothing in its night,—with prohibitions against seeking any supernatural favour or manifestation whatever.¹⁰

Urganda the fairy could find no way of raising the paladins she loved above the common lot of mortals, save that of throwing them into an enchanted sleep. So Galaor, Amadis, and Esplandian, sink into the image of death beneath her kindly wand. Such is the device of John—and so does he lull and ward venturous Understanding, learned Memory, and fiery Will. Faith is the night which extinguishes Understanding ; Hope, Memory ; and Love, Will. The very desire after supernatural bestowments, (though for no other purpose has everything natural been doomed to die) would be a stirring in the torpor—a restless, not a perfect sleep. The serenest Quiet may be ruffled by no such wish.

This, therefore, is John's fundamental principle. All faculties and operations not beyond the limits of our nature must cease, that we may have no natural knowledge, no natural affection ; but find, magically substituted, divine apprehensions and divine sentiments quite foreign to ourselves. Then, still farther, we are desired to ignore even supernatural manifestations, if they represent to us anything whatever ; that we may rise, or sink

¹⁰ In the chapter just cited, John says expressly, '*Elle ne saurait cependant s'élever à ces connaissances et à ces touches divines par sa coopération,*' and describes these gifts as coming from God, '*subitement et sans attendre le consentement de la volonté.*'

—P. 485. So again, quite as strongly, liv. II. chap. xi. p. 445. He discourtenances the attempt to seek perfection by the '*voies surnaturelles,*' yet his books are an introduction to the mystical evening, and a guide through the mystical midnight.

(it is the same), to that swooning gaze on the Infinite Ineffable, wherein our dissolving nature sees, hears, knows, wills, remembers nothing.¹¹

The THIRD NIGHT—that of the *Memory* and the *Will*.¹² Here, not only do all the ‘trivial fond records’ that may have been inscribed upon remembrance vanish utterly, but every trace of the divinest tokens and most devout experience. The soul sinks into profound oblivion. The flight of time is unmarked, bodily pain unfelt, and the place of Memory entirely emptied of its stored ‘species and cognitions,’—of everything particular and distinct. The patient forgets to eat and drink,—knows not whether he has done or not done, said or not said, heard or not heard this or that.

‘Strange exaltation this,’ cries the objector, ‘which imbrutes and makes a blank of man—sinks him below idiotic ignorance of truth and virtue !’

John is ready with his answer. This torpor, he replies, is but transitory. The perfect mystic, the adept established in union, has ceased to suffer this oblivion. Passing through it, he acquires a new and divine facility for every duty proper to his station. He is in the supernatural state, and his powers have so passed into God that the Divine Spirit makes them operate divinely,—all they do is divine. The Spirit makes such a man constantly ignorant of what he ought to be ignorant ; makes him remember what he ought to remember ; and love what is to be loved—God only. Transformed in God, these powers are human no more.¹³

In the same way the night of will extinguishes joy,—joy in sensible good, in moral excellence, in supernatural gifts, that the soul may soar to a delight above delight, be suspended as in a limitless expanse of calm, far beyond that lower

¹¹ *La Nuit Obscure*, liv. II. ch. ix. ; especially the passage cited in note on p. 195.

¹² This night occupies the third book of the *Montée du Carmel*.

¹³ See Note on p. 196.

meteoric sky which is figured over with wonders and with signs.

Thus John's desired *contemplatio infusa* is always, at the same time, a *contemplatio confusa*.

At his culminating point the mystic is concealed as 'on the secret top of Horeb ;' he ascends by a hidden scale, cloaked with darkness (*por la secreta escala—a escuras y enzelada*).

Mark the advantage of this enclouded state. The Devil, it is said, can only get at what is passing in our mind by observing the operations of the mental powers. If, therefore, these are inactive and absorbed, and a divine communication goes on, in which they have no part whatever, Satan is baffled. These highest manifestations, absolutely pure, nude, and immediate he cannot counterfeit or hinder. The soul is then blissfully incognito and anonymous. This secrecy preserves the mystic from malign arts, as the concealment of their real names was thought the safeguard of ancient cities, since hostile soothsayers, ignorant of the true name to conjure by, could not then entice away their tutelary gods.¹⁴

Such then is the teaching of the *Mount Carmel* and the *Obscure Night*, starred with numerous most irrelevant quotations from the psalms and the prophecies, as though David and Isaiah were Quietists, and spent their days in trying to benumb imagination, banish the sensuous images which made them poets, and tone down all distinct ideas to a lustreless, formless neutral tint. The Spanish painters have not more anachronisms than the Spanish mystics ; and I think of Murillo's 'Moses striking the Rock,' where Andalusian costumes make gay the desert, Andalusian faces stoop to drink, and Andalusian crockery is held out to catch the dashing streams.

In John of the Cross we behold the final masterpiece of Romanist mysticism, and the practice (if here the term be

¹⁴ See second Note on p. 196.

applicable) of supernatural theopathy is complete. The Art of Sinking in Religion—the divinity of diving, could go no deeper. The natives of South America say that the lobo or seal has to swallow great stones when he wishes to sink to the river-bed—so little natural facility has he that way. We sinners, too, have no native alacrity for the mystical descent: our gravitation does not tend towards that depth of nothing; and huge and hard are the stones (not bread) with which this mystagogue would lade us to bring us down. And when, in imagination at least, at the bottom, we are smothered in an obscure night of mud. What a granite boulder is this to swallow,—to be told that the faintest film of attachment that links you with any human being or created thing will frustrate all your aim, and be stout as a cable to hold back your soul,—that with all your mind, and soul, and strength, you must seek out and adore the Uncomfortable, for its own sake—that, drowned and dead, you must lie far down, hidden, not from the pleasant sunshine only, but from all sweet gladness of faith and hope and love—awaiting, in obstruction, an abstraction. This resurrection to a supersensuous serenity, wherein divine powers supersede your own, is a mere imagination—a change of words; the old hallucination of the mystic. After going through a certain amount of suffering, the devotee chooses to term whatever thoughts or feelings he may have, his own no longer: he fancies them divine. It is the same man from first to last.

Admitting its great fundamental error—this unnaturalness,—as though grace came in to make our flesh and blood a senseless puppet pulled by celestial wires,—it must be conceded that the mysticism of John takes the very highest ground. It looks almost with contempt upon the phantoms, the caresses, the theurgic toys of grosser mystics. In this respect, John is far beyond Theresa. He has a purpose; he thinks he knows

a way to it ; and he pursues it, unfaltering, to the issue. He gazes steadily on the grand impalpability of the Areopagite, and essays to mount thither with a holy ardour of which the old Greek gives no sign. And this, too, with the vision-craving sentimental Theresa at his side, and a coarsely sensuous Romanism all around him. No wonder that so stern a spiritualism was little to the taste of some church-dignitaries in soft raiment. It is impossible not to recognize a certain grandeur in such a man. Miserably mistaken as he was, he is genuine throughout as mystic and ascetic. Every bitter cup he would press to the lips of others he had first drained himself. His eagerness to suffer was no bravado—no romancing affectation, as with many of his tribe. In his last illness at Pegnuela he was allowed his choice of removal between two places. At one of them his deadly enemy was prior. He bade them carry him thither, for there he would have most to endure. That infamous prior treated with the utmost barbarity the dying saint, on whom his implacable hatred had already heaped every wrong within his power.¹⁵ Let, then, a melancholy admiration be the meed of John—not because the mere mention of the cross was sufficient, frequently, to throw him into an ecstasy,—not because his face was seen more than once radiant with a lambent fire from heaven,—these are the vulgar glories of the calendar,—but because, believing in mystical death, he did his best to die it, and displayed in suffering and in action a self-sacrificing heroism which could only spring from a devout and a profound conviction. We find in him no sanctimonious lies, no mean or cruel things done for the honour of his Church—perhaps he was not thus tempted or commanded as others have been,—and so, while he must have less merit with Rome as a monk, let him have the more with us as a man.

¹⁵ See the life of the saint in Alban Butler, Nov. 24.

NOTE TO PAGE 188.

Montée du Carmel, liv. II. ch. ii. and iv. ; also *La Nuit Obscure*, I. viii. and II. ch. v.-ix. This night is far more dark and painful than the first and third ; and while the first is represented as common to many religious aspirants, the second is attained but by a few.

Si quelqu'un demande pourquoi l'âme donne le nom de nuit obscure à la lumière divine qui dissipe ses ignorances, je réponds que cette divine sagesse est non-seulement la nuit de l'âme, mais encore son supplice, pour deux raisons : la première est, parce que la sublimité de la sagesse divine surpasse de telle sorte la capacité de l'âme, que ce n'est que nuit et ténèbres pour elle ; la seconde, la bassesse et l'impureté de l'âme sont telles, que cette sagesse la remplit de peines et d'obscurités.—P. 593.

Mais le plus grand supplice de l'âme est de croire que Dieu la hait, la délaisse, et la jette pour cette raison dans les ténèbres. . . . En effet, lorsque la contemplation dont Dieu se sert pour purifier l'âme la mortifie en la dépouillant de tout, l'âme éprouve, avec une vivacité pénétrante, toute l'horreur que cause la mort, et toutes les douleurs et tous les gémissements de l'enfer, &c. . . . On peut dire avec probabilité, qu'une âme qui a passé par ce purgatoire spirituel, ou n'entrera pas dans le purgatoire de l'autre monde, ou n'y demeurera pas longtemps.—P. 597.

But the most characteristic passage on this subject is the following : it contains the essence of his mysticism :—Les affections et les connaissances de l'esprit purifié et élevé à la perfection sont d'un rang supérieur aux affections et aux connaissances naturelles, elles sont surnaturelles et divines ; de sorte que, pour en acquérir les actes ou les habitudes, il est nécessaire que celles *qui ne sortent point des bornes de la nature* soient éteintes. C'est pourquoi il est d'une grand utilité en cette matière que l'esprit perde dans cette nuit obscure ses connaissances naturelles, pour être revêtu de cette lumière très-subtile et toute divine, et pour devenir lui-même, en quelque façon, tout divin dans son union avec la sagesse de Dieu. Cette nuit ou cette obscurité doit durer autant de temps qu'il en faut pour contracter l'habitude dans l'usage qu'on fait de cette lumière surnaturelle. On doit dire la même chose de la volonté : elle est obligée de se défaire de toutes ses affections qui l'attachent aux objets naturels, pour recevoir les admirables effets de l'amour qui est extrêmement spirituel, subtil, délicat, intime, qui surpasse tous les sentiments naturels et toutes les affections de la volonté, qui est enfin tout divin ; et afin qu'elle soit toute transformée en cette amour par l'union qui lui est accordée dans la perte de tous ses biens naturels.

Il faut encore que la mémoire soit dénuée des images qui lui forment les connaissances douces et tranquilles des choses dont elle se souvient, afin qu'elle les regarde comme des choses étrangères, et que ces choses lui paraissent d'une manière différente de l'idée qu'elle en avait auparavant. Par ce moyen, cette nuit obscure retirera l'esprit du sentiment commun et ordinaire qu'il avait des objets créés, et lui imprimera *un sentiment tout divin*, qui lui semblera étranger ; en sorte que l'âme vivra comme hors d'elle-même, et élevée au-dessus de la vie humaine ; elle doutera quelquefois si ce qui se passe en elle n'est point un enchantement, ou une stupidité d'esprit ; elle s'étonnera de voir et d'entendre des choses qui lui semblent fort nouvelles, quoiqu'elles soient les mêmes que celles qu'elle avait autrefois entre les mains. *La cause de ce changement est parce que l'âme doit perdre entièrement ses connaissances et ses sentiments humains, pour prendre des connaissances et des sentiments divins ; ce qui est plus propre de la vie future que de la vie présente.*—P. 601.

NOTE TO PAGE 191.

'Pour répondre a cette objection, je dis que plus la mémoire est unie à Dieu, plus elle perd ses connaissances distinctes et particulières, jusqu'à ce qu'elle les oublie entièrement : ce qui arrive lorsque l'âme est établie dans l'union parfaite. C'est pourquoi elle tombe d'abord dans un grand oubli, puisque le souvenir des espèces et des connaissances s'évanouit en elle. Ensuite elle se comporte à l'égard des choses extérieures avec une négligence si notable et un si grand mépris d'elle-même, qu'étant toute abîmée en Dieu, elle oublie le boire et le manger, et elle ne sait si elle a fait quelque chose ou non, si elle a vu ou non ; si on lui a parlé ou non. Mais lorsqu'elle est affermie dans l'habitude de l'union, qui est son souverain bien, elle ne souffre plus ces oubliances dans les choses raisonnables, dans les choses morales, ni dans les choses naturelles : au contraire, elle est plus parfaite dans les opérations convenables à son état, quoiqu'elle les produise par le ministère des images et des connaissances que Dieu excite d'une façon particulière dans la mémoire. Car lorsque l'habitude de l'union, qui est un état surnaturel, est formée, la mémoire et les autres puissances quittent leurs opérations naturelles et passent jusqu'à Dieu, qui est à leur égard un terme surnaturel. En sorte que la mémoire étant toute transformée en Dieu, ses opérations ne lui sont plus imprimées, et ne demeurent plus attachées à elle. La mémoire et les autres facultés de l'âme sont occupées de Dieu avec un empire si absolu, qu'elles semblent être toutes divines, et que c'est lui-même qui les meut par son esprit et par sa volonté divine, et qui les fait opérer en quelque façon divinement : "Puisque celui," dit l'Apôtre, "qui s'unit au Seigneur, devient une même esprit avec lui" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Il est donc véritable que les opérations de l'âme, étant unies totalement à Dieu, sont toutes divines.'—*Montée du Carmel*, liv. III. ch. i.

NOTE TO PAGE 192.

La Nuit Obscure, liv. II. ch. xvii. xviii.:—'L'esprit malin ne peut connaître ce qui se passe dans la volonté que par les opérations de ces puissances. Ainsi, plus les communications de Dieu sont spirituelles, intérieures, et éloignées des sens, moins il peut découvrir et les pénétrer'.—P. 621.

Evil angels may counterfeit those supernatural communications which are vouchsafed through the agency of the good. But the infused passive contemplation, in which neither the understanding, the imagination, nor the sense, exercise their representative office, is secret and safe. 'Quand Dieu la (l'âme) comble immédiatement par lui-même de ses grâces spirituelles, elle se dérobe entièrement à la vue de son adversaire, parceque Dieu, qui est son souverain Seigneur, demeure en elle, et ni les bons ni les mauvais anges ne peuvent y avoir entrée, ni découvrir les communications intimes et secrètes qui se font entre Dieu et l'âme. Elles sont toutes divines, elles sont infiniment élevées, elles sont en quelque sorte les sacrés attachements des deux extrémités qui se trouvent entre Dieu et l'âme dans leur union : et c'est là où l'âme reçoit plus de biens spirituels qu'en tous les autres degrés de la contemplation (*Cant* I. 1). C'est aussi ce que l'épouse demandait, quand elle pria l'Epoux divin de lui donner un saint baiser de sa bouche'.—Chap. xxiii. p. 623.

Thus, this culminating point of negation is at least, to some extent, a safeguard. The extinction of knowledge, by confining ourselves to the incomprehensible (*Lettres Spirituelles*, p. 724), and of joy, by renouncing spiritual delights, the refusal to entertain any extraordinary manifestations that assume a definite form or purport, does at the same time shut out all that region of visionary hallucination in which many mystics have passed their days. It is indisputably true that the more the mystic avoids, rather than craves, the excite-

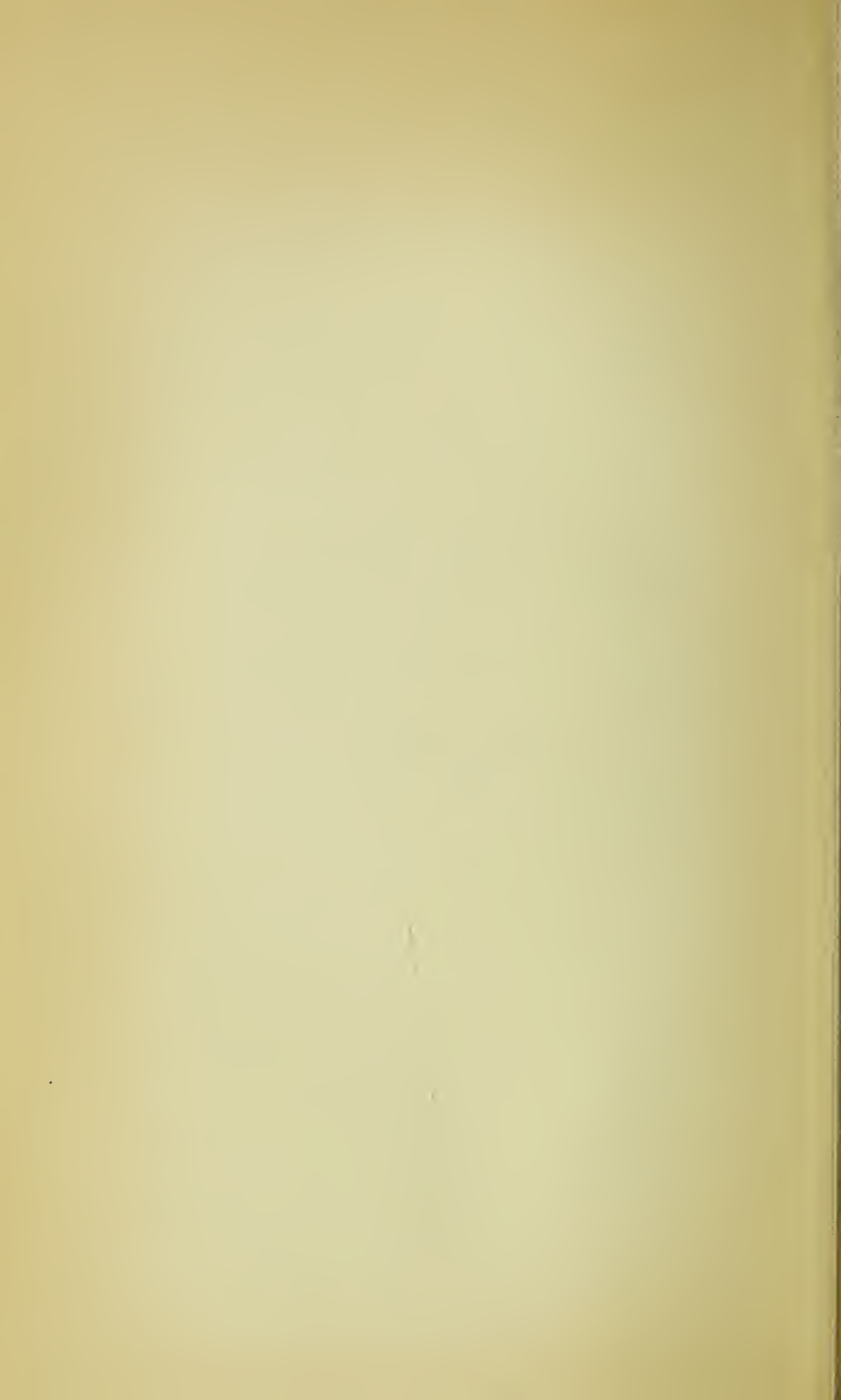
ments of imagination, sentiment, and miracle, the safer must be from the delusions to which he is exposed, if not by the juggle of lying spirits, by the fever of his own distempered brain. No one who obeys John's great maxim, 'Il ne faut pas voyager pour voir, mais pour ne pas voir,' will trouble the holy darkness of his church by any erratic novelties of light. Indeed, against such danger careful provision is made by that law which is with him the *sine quâ non* of mystical progress,—Ne regardez jamais votre supérieur, quel qu'il soit, que comme Dieu même, puisqu'il vous est donné comme lieutenant de Dieu.—*Précautions Spirituelles*, p. 734.



BOOK THE TENTH



QUIETISM.



CHAPTER I.

Love! if thy destined sacrifice am I,
Come, slay thy victim, and prepare thy fires ;
Plunged in thy depths of mercy let me die
The death which every soul that lives desires !

MADAME GUYON.

DO you remember,' said Atherton to Willoughby, when he had called to see him one morning, 'the hunt we once had after that passage in Jeremy Taylor, about Bishop Ivo's adventure? Coleridge relates the story without saying exactly where it is, and his daughter states in a note that she had been unable to find the place in Taylor.'

'I recollect it perfectly ; and we discovered it, I think, in the first part of his sermon *On the Mercy of the Divine Judgments*. Ivo, going on an embassy for St. Louis, meets by the way a grave, sad woman, doesn't he?—with fire in one hand, and water in the other ; and when he inquires what these symbols may mean, she answers, "My purpose is, with fire to burn Paradise, and with my water to quench the flames of hell, that men may serve God without the incentives of hope and fear, and purely for the love of God."

'Well, Gower has painted her portrait for us,—Queen Quietude, he calls her : and it is to be hung up here over my chimney-piece, by the next evening we meet together.'

The evening came. Atherton was to read a paper on 'Madame Guyon and the Quietist Controversy,' and Gower was to exhibit and explain his allegorical picture.

This painting represented a female figure, simply clad in

sombre garments, sitting on a fragment of rock at the summit of a high hill. On her head hung a garland, half untwined, from neglect, which had been fantastically woven of cypress, bound about with heart's-ease. Many flowers of the heart's-ease had dropped off, withered ; some were lying unheeded in her lap. Her face was bent downward ; its expression perfectly calm, and the cast of sadness it wore rather recorded a past, than betrayed a present sorrow. Her eyes were fixed pensively, and without seeming to see them, on the thin hands which lay folded on her knees. No anxious effort of thought contracted that placid brow ; no eager aspiration lifted those meekly-drooping eyelids.

At her feet lay, on her right, the little brazier in which she had carried her fire, still emitting its grey curls of smoke ; and, on her left, the overturned water-urn—a Fortunatus-purse of water,—from whose silver hollow an inexhaustible stream welled out, and leaping down, was lost to sight among the rocks.

Behind her lay two wastes, stretching from east to west. The vast tracts, visible from her far-seeing mountain, were faintly presented in the distance of the picture. But they were never looked upon ; her back was toward them ; they belonged to a past never remembered. In the east stretched level lands, covered far as the eye could reach with cold grey inundation. Here and there coal-black ridges and dots indicated the highest grounds still imperfectly submerged ; and in some places clouds of steam, water-spouts, and jets of stones and mire,—even boulders of rock, hurled streaming out of the waters into the air,—betrayed the last struggles of the Fire-Kingdom with the invasion of those illimitable tides. So have her enchantments slain the Giant of Fire, and laid him to rest under a water-pall. The place of dolours and of endless burning—so populous with Sorrows—is to be a place of great waters, where the slow vacant waves of the far-glittering reaches will come

and go among the channels and the pools, and not even the bittern shall be there, with his foot to print the ooze, with his wing to shadow the sleeping shallows, with his cry to declare it all a desolation.

In the western background, the saintly art of Queen Quietude has made a whole burnt-offering of the cedar shades, and flowery labyrinths, and angel-built crystal domes of Paradise. Most fragrant holocaust that ever breathed against the sky! Those volumes of cloud along the west, through which the sun is going down with dimmed and doubtful lustre (as though his had been the hand which put the torch to such a burning)—they are heavy with spicy odours. Such sweet wonders of the Eden woodlands cannot but give out sweetness in their dying. The heavens grow dusk and slumbrous with so much incense. A dreamy faintness from the laden air weighs down the sense. It seems time to sleep—for us, for all nature, to sleep, weary of terrestrial grossness and of mortal limitation,—to sleep, that all may awake, made new; and so, transformed divinely to the first ideal, have divine existence only, and God be all and in all. For God is love, and when hope and fear are dead, then love is all.

Somewhat thus did Gower describe his picture; whereon, in truth, he had expended no little art,—such a haze of repose, and likewise of unreality, had he contrived to throw over this work of fancy; and such a tone had he given, both to the work of the fire on the one side, and to that of the water on the other. The fire did not seem a cruel fire, nor the water an inhospitable water. Golden lines of light from the sun, and rose-red reflections from clouds whose breasts were feathered with fire, rested on the heads of the waves, where the great flood lay rocking. The very ruins of Paradise,—those charred tree-trunks—those dusty river-beds—that shrivelled boskage and white grass,—did not look utterly forlorn. Some of the

glassy walls still stood, shining like rubies in the sunset, and glittering at their basements and their gateways with solid falls and pools of gold and silver, where their rich adornment had run down molten to their feet. The Destroyer was the Purifier; and the waiting sigh for renewal was full of trust.

‘A better frontispiece,’ said Atherton, ‘I could not have for my poor paper. I might have been raised to a less prosaic strain, and omitted some less relevant matter, had I been able to place your picture before me while writing. For upon this question of disinterested love, and so of quietude, our mysticism now mainly turns. With Fénelon and Madame Guyon, mysticism hovers no longer on the confines of pantheism. It deals less with mere abstractions. It is less eager to have everything which is in part done away, that the perfect may come, even while we are here. It is more patient and lowly, and will oftener use common means. Its inner light is not arrogant—for submissive love is that light; and it flames forth with no pretension to special revelations and novel gospels; neither does it construct any inspired system of philosophy. It is less feverishly ecstatic, less grossly theurgic, than in the lower forms of its earlier history. Comparative health is indicated by the fact that it aspires chiefly to a state of continuous resignation,—covets less starts of transport and instantaneous transformations. It seeks, rather, a long and even reach of trustful calm, which shall welcome joy and sorrow with equal mind,—shall live in the present, moment by moment, passive and dependent on the will of the Well-Beloved.

WILLOUGHBY. With Madame Guyon, too, I think the point of the old antithesis about which the mystics have so much to say is shifted;—I mean that the contrast lies, with her, not between Finite and Infinite—the finite Affirmation, the infinite Negation,—between sign and thing signified—between mode

and modelessness—mediate and immediate,—but simply between God and Self.

ATHERTON. And so mysticism grows somewhat more clear, and reduces itself to narrower compass.

GOWER. And, just as it does so, is condemned by Rome.

ATHERTON. No doubt the attempt to reach an unattainable disinterestedness was less dangerous and less unwholesome than the strain after superhuman knowledge and miraculous vision.

MRS. ATHERTON. I have just opened on one of her verses in Cowper here, which exactly expresses what Mr. Willoughby was suggesting :—

The love of Thee flows just as much
As that of ebbing self subsides ;
Our hearts, their scantiness is such,
Bear not the conflict of two rival tides.

Stay ; here is one I marked, which goes farther still. It is an allegorical poem. Love has bidden her embark, and then withdraws the vessel,—leaves her floating on the rushes and water-flowers, and spreads his wings for flight, heedless of her cries and prayers. At last she says,—

Be not angry ; I resign
Henceforth all my will to thine :
I consent that thou depart,
Though thine absence breaks my heart ;
Go then, and for ever too ;
All is right that thou wilt do.

This was just what Love intended,
He was now no more offended ;
Soon as I became a child,
Love returned to me and smiled :
Never strife shall more betide
'Twixt the bridegroom and his bride.

ATHERTON. Yes, this is the pure love, the holy indifference of Quietism.

WILLOUGHBY. May not this imaginary surrender of eternal happiness—or, at least, the refusal to cherish ardent anticipations of heaven, really invigorate our spiritual nature, by concentrating our religion on a *present* salvation from sin ?

ATHERTON. I think it possibly may, where contemplation of heaven is the resource of spiritual indolence or weariness in well-doing,—where the mind is prone to look forward to the better world, too much as a place of escape from the paining, and difficulty, and discipline of time. But where the hope of heaven is of the true sort—to put it out of sight is grievously to weaken, instead of strengthening, our position. I think we should all find, if we tried, or were unhappily forced to try, the experiment of sustaining ourselves in a religion that ignored the future, that we were lamentably enfeebled in two ways. First of all, by the loss of a support—that heart and courage which the prospect of final victory gives to every combatant; and then, secondly, by the immense drain of mental energy involved in the struggle necessary to reconcile ourselves to that loss. There can be no struggle so exhaustive as this, for it is against our nature,—not as sin has marred (so Madame Guyon thought), but as God has made it. Fearful must be the wear and tear of our religious being, in its vital functions,—and this, not to win, but to abandon an advantage. ‘He that hath this hope purifieth himself.’ So far from being able to dispense with it, we find in the hope of salvation, the helmet of our Christian armour. It is no height of Christian heroism, but presumption rather, to encounter, bare-headed, the onslaughts of sin and sorrow—even though the sword of the Spirit may shine naked in our right hand. But we should, at the same time, remember that our celestial citizenship is realised by *present* heavenly-mindedness :—a height and purity of temper, however, which grows most within as we have the habit of humbly regarding that kingdom as a place prepared for us. We should not limit our foretastes of heaven to intervals of calm. We may often be growing most heavenly amid scenes most unlike heaven.

WILLOUGHBY. In persecution, for example.

ATHERTON. We should not think that we catch its glory only in happy moments of contemplation, though such musing may well have its permitted place. Let us say also that every victory over love of ease, over discontent, over the sluggish coldness of the heart, over reluctance to duty, over unkindly tempers, is in fact to us an earnest and foretaste of that heaven, where we shall actively obey with glad alacrity, where we shall be pleased in all things with all that pleases God, where glorious powers shall be gloriously developed, undeveloped by any lethargy, unhindered by any painful limitation ; and where that Love, which here has to contend for very life, and to do battle for its rightful enjoyments, shall possess us wholly, and rejoice and reign among all the fellowships of the blest throughout the everlasting day.

GOWER. But all this while we have been very rude. Here is Madame Guyon come to tell us her story, and we have kept her, I don't know how long, standing at the door.

KATE. Yes, let us hear your paper first, Mr. Atherton : we can talk afterwards, you know.

So Atherton began to read.

QUIETISM.

Part I.—Madame Guyon.

I.

Jeanne Marie Bouvières de la Mothe was born on Easter-eve, April 13th, 1648, at Montargis. Her sickly childhood was distinguished by precocious imitations of that religious life which was held in honour by every one around her. She loved to be dressed in the habit of a little nun. When little more than four years old, she longed for martyrdom. Her school-fellows placed her on her knees on a white cloth, flourished a sabre over her head, and told her to prepare for the stroke. A shout of triumphant laughter followed the failure of the child's

courage. She was neglected by her mother, and knocked about by a spoiled brother. When not at school, she was the pet or the victim of servants. She began to grow irritable from ill-treatment, and insincere from fear. When ten years old, she found a Bible in her sick room, and read it, she says, from morning to night, committing to memory the historical parts. Some of the writings of St. Francis de Sales, and the *Life of Madame de Chantal*, fell in her way. The latter work proved a powerful stimulant. There she read of humiliations and austerities numberless, of charities lavished with a princely munificence, of visions enjoyed and miracles wrought in honour of those saintly virtues, and of the intrepidity with which the famous enthusiast wrote with a red-hot iron on her bosom, the characters of the holy name Jesus. The girl of twelve years old was bent on copying these achievements on her little scale. She relieved, taught, and waited on the poor; and, for lack of the red-hot iron or the courage, sewed on to her breast with a large needle a piece of paper containing the name of Christ. She even forged a letter to secure her admission to a conventual establishment as a nun. The deceit was immediately detected; but the attempt shows how much more favourable was the religious atmosphere in which she grew up, to the prosperity of convents than to the inculcation of truth.

With ripening years, religion gave place to vanity. Her handsome person and brilliant conversational powers fitted her to shine in society. She began to love dress, and feel jealous of rival beauties. Like St. Theresa, at the same age, she sat up far into the night, devouring romances. Her autobiography records her experience of the mischievous effects of those tales of chivalry and passion. When nearly sixteen, it was arranged that she should marry the wealthy M. Guyon. This gentleman, whom she had seen but three days before her marriage, was twenty-two years older than herself.

The faults she had were of no very grave description, but her husband's house was destined to prove for several years a pitiless school for their correction. He lived with his mother, a vulgar and hard-hearted woman. Her low and penurious habits were unaffected by their wealth; and in the midst of riches, she was happiest scolding in the kitchen about some farthing matter. She appears to have hated Madame Guyon with all the strength of her narrow mind. M. Guyon loved his wife after his selfish sort. If she was ill, he was inconsolable; if any one spoke against her, he flew into a passion; yet, at the instigation of his mother, he was continually treating her with harshness. An artful servant girl, who tended his gouty leg, was permitted daily to mortify and insult his wife. Madame Guyon had been accustomed at home to elegance and refinement,—beneath her husband's roof she found politeness contemned and rebuked as pride. When she spoke, she had been listened to with attention,—now she could not open her mouth without contradiction. She was charged with presuming to show them how to talk, reprov'd for disputatious forwardness, and rudely silenced. She could never go to see her parents without having bitter speeches to bear on her return. They, on their part, reproached her with unnatural indifference towards her own family for the sake of her new connexions. The ingenious malignity of her mother-in-law filled every day with fresh vexations. The high spirit of the young girl was completely broken. She had already gained a reputation for cleverness and wit—now she sat nightmared in company, nervous, stiff, and silent, the picture of stupidity. At every assemblage of their friends she was marked out for some affront, and every visitor at the house was instructed in the catalogue of her offences. Sad thoughts would come—how different might all this have been had she been suffered to select some other suitor! But it was too late. The brief romance of her life was gone indeed.

There was no friend into whose heart she could pour her sorrows. Meanwhile, she was indefatigable in the discharge of every duty,—she endeavoured by kindness, by cheerful forbearance, by returning good for evil, to secure some kinder treatment—she was ready to cut out her tongue that she might make no passionate reply—she reproached herself bitterly for the tears she could not hide. But these coarse, hard natures were not so to be won. Her magnanimity surprised, but did not soften minds to which it was utterly incomprehensible.¹

Her best course would have been self-assertion and war to the very utmost. She would have been justified in demanding her right to be mistress in her own house—in declaring it incompatible with the obligations binding upon either side, that a third party should be permitted to sow dissension between a husband and his wife—in putting her husband, finally, to the choice between his wife and his mother. M. Guyon is the type of a large class of men. They stand high in the eye of the world—and not altogether undeservedly—as men of principle. But their domestic circle is the scene of cruel wrongs from want of reflection, from a selfish, passionate inconsiderateness. They would be shocked at the charge of an act of barbarity towards a stranger, but they will inflict years of mental distress on those most near to them, for want of decision, self-control, and some conscientious estimate of what their home duties truly involve. Had the obligations he neglected, the wretchedness of which he was indirectly the author, been brought fairly before the mind of M. Guyon, he would probably have determined on the side of justice, and a domestic revolution would have been the consequence. But Madame Guyon conceived herself bound to suffer in silence. Looking back on those

See the first six chapters of her *Autobiography*. This life was published posthumously at Cologne, in

1720. I have used an anonymous English translation, published at Bristol, in 1772.

miserable days, she traced a father's care in the discipline she endured. Providence had transplanted Self from a garden where it expanded under love and praise, to a highway where every passing foot might trample it in the dust.

A severe illness brought her more than once to the brink of the grave. She heard of her danger with indifference, for life had no attraction. Heavy losses befel the family—she could feel no concern. To end her days in a hospital was even an agreeable anticipation. Poverty and disgrace could bring no change which would not be more tolerable than her present suffering. She laboured, with little success, to find comfort in religious exercises. She examined herself rigidly, confessed with frequency, strove to subdue all care about her personal appearance, and while her maid arranged her hair—how, she cared not—was lost in the study of Thomas à Kempis. At length she consulted a Franciscan, a holy man, who had just emerged from a five years' solitude. 'Madame,' said he, 'you are disappointed and perplexed because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will find Him.'

II.

These words of the old Franciscan embody the response which has been uttered in every age by the oracle of mysticism. It has its truth and its falsehood, as men understand it. There is a legend of an artist, who was about to carve from a piece of costly sandal-wood an image of the Madonna; but the material was intractable—his hand seemed to have lost its skill—he could not approach his ideal. When about to relinquish his efforts in despair, a voice in a dream bade him shape the figure from the oak-block which was about to feed his hearth. He obeyed, and produced a masterpiece. This story represents the truth which mysticism upholds when it appears as the antagonist of superstitious externalism. The materials

of religious happiness lie, as it were, near at hand—among affections and desires which are homely, common, and of the fireside. Let the right direction, the heavenly influence, be received from without ; and heaven is regarded with the love of home, and home sanctified by the hope of heaven. The far-fetched costliness of outward works—the restless, selfish bargaining with asceticism and with priestcraft for a priceless heaven, can never redeem and renew a soul to peace. But mysticism has not stopped here ; it takes a step farther, and that step is false. It would seclude the soul too much from the external ; and, to free it from a snare, removes a necessary help. Like some overshadowing tree, it hides the rising plant from the force of storms, but it also intercepts the appointed sunshine—it protects, but it deprives—and beneath its boughs hardy weeds have grown more vigorously than precious grain. Removing, more or less, the counterpoise of the letter, in its zeal for the spirit, it promotes an intense and morbid self-consciousness. Roger North tells us that when he and his brother stood on the top of the Monument, it was difficult for them to persuade themselves that their weight would not throw down the building. The dizzy elevation of the mystic produces sometimes a similar overweening sense of personality.

Often instead of rising above the infirmities of our nature, and the common laws of life, the mystic becomes the sport of the idlest phantasy, the victim of the most humiliating reaction. The excited and overwrought temperament mistakes every vibration of the fevered nerves for a manifestation from without ; as in the solitude, the silence, and the glare of a great desert, travellers have seemed to hear distinctly the church bells of their native village. In such cases an extreme susceptibility of the organ, induced by peculiarities of climate, gives to a mere conception or memory the power of an actual sound ; and, in a similar way, the mystic has often both tempted and

enraptured himself—his own breath has made both the ‘airs from heaven,’ and the ‘blasts from hell;’ and the attempt to annihilate Self has ended at last in leaving nothing but Self behind. When the tide of enthusiasm has ebbed, and the channel has become dry, simply because humanity cannot long endure a strain so excessive, then that magician and master of legerdemain, the Fancy, is summoned to recal, to eke out, or to interpret the mystical experience; then that fantastic acrobat, Affectation, is admitted to play its tricks—just as, when the waters of the Nile are withdrawn, the canals of Cairo are made the stage on which the jugglers exhibit their feats of skill to the crowds on either bank.

III.

To return to Madame Guyon. From the hour of that interview with the Franciscan she was a mystic. The secret of the interior life flashed upon her in a moment. She had been starving in the midst of fulness; God was near, not far off; the kingdom of heaven was within her. The love of God took possession of her soul with an inexpressible happiness. Beyond question, her heart apprehended, in that joy, the great truth that God is love—that He is more ready to forgive, than we to ask forgiveness—that He is not an austere being whose regard is to be purchased by rich gifts, tears, and penance. This emancipating, sanctifying belief became the foundation of her religion. She raised on this basis of true spirituality a mystical superstructure, in which there was some hay and stubble, but the corner stone had first been rightly laid, never to be removed from its place.

Prayer, which had before been so difficult, was now delightful and indispensable; hours passed away like moments—she could scarcely cease from praying. Her trials seemed great no longer; her inward joy consumed, like a fire, the reluctance,

the murmur, and the sorrow, which had their birth in self. A spirit of confiding peace, a sense of rejoicing possession, pervaded all her days. God was continually present with her, and she seemed completely yielded up to God. She appeared to feel herself, and to behold all creatures, as immersed in the gracious omnipresence of the Most High. In her adoring contemplation of the Divine presence, she found herself frequently unable to employ any words, or to pray for any particular blessings.² She was then little more than twenty years of age. The ardour of her devotion would not suffer her to rest even here. It appeared to her that self was not yet sufficiently suppressed. There were some things she chose as pleasant, other things she avoided as painful. She was possessed with the notion that every choice which can be referred to self is selfish, and therefore criminal.

On this principle, Æsop's traveller, who gathered his cloak about him in the storm, and relinquished it in the sunshine, should be stigmatized as a selfish man, because he thought only of his own comfort, and did not remember at the moment his family, his country, or his Maker. It is not regard for self which makes us selfish, but regard for self to the exclusion of due regard for others. But the zeal of Madame Guyon blinded her to distinctions such as these. She became filled with an insatiable desire of suffering.³ She resolved to force herself to what she disliked, and deny herself what was gratifying, that the mortified senses might at last have no choice whatever. She displayed the most extraordinary power of will in her efforts to annihilate her will. Every day she took the discipline with scourges pointed with iron. She tore her flesh with brambles, thorns, and nettles. Her rest was almost destroyed by the pain she endured. She was in very delicate health, continually falling ill, and could eat scarcely anything. Yet

² See Note on p. 238.

³ *Autobiography*, chap. x.

she forced herself to eat what was most nauseous to her ; she often kept wormwood in her mouth, and put coloquintida in her food, and when she walked she placed stones in her shoes. If a tooth ached she would bear it without seeking a remedy ; when it ached no longer, she would go and have it extracted. She imitated Madame Chantal in dressing the sores of the poor, and ministering to the wants of the sick. On one occasion she found that she could not seek the indulgence offered by her Church for remitting some of the pains of purgatory. At that time she felt no doubt concerning the power of the priest to grant such absolution, but she thought it wrong to desire to escape any suffering. She was afraid of resembling those mercenary souls, who are afraid not so much of displeasing God, as of the penalties attached to sin. She was too much in earnest for visionary sentimentalism. Her efforts manifest a serious practical endeavour after that absolute disinterestedness which she erroneously thought both attainable and enjoined. She was far from attaching any expiatory value to these acts of voluntary mortification, they were a means to an end. When she believed that end attained, in the entire death of self, she relinquished them.

IV.

Situated as Madame Guyon was now, her mind had no resource but to collapse upon itself, and the feelings so painfully pent up became proportionately vehement. She found a friend in one Mère Granger ; but her she could see seldom, mostly by stealth. An ignorant confessor joined her mother-in-law and husband in the attempt to hinder her from prayer and religious exercises. She endeavoured in everything to please her husband, but he complained that she loved God so much she had no love left for him. She was watched day and night ; she dared not stir from her mother-in-law's chamber or her

husband's bedside. If she took her work apart to the window, they followed her there, to see that she was not in prayer. When her husband went abroad, he forbade her to pray in his absence. The affections even of her child were taken from her, and the boy was taught to disobey and insult his mother. Thus utterly alone, Madame Guyon, while apparently engaged in ordinary matters, was constantly in a state of abstraction; her mind was elsewhere, rapt in devout contemplation. She was in company without hearing a word that was said. She went out into the garden to look at the flowers, and could bring back no account of them, the eye of her reverie could mark nothing actually visible. When playing at piquet, to oblige her husband, this 'interior attraction' was often more powerfully felt than even when at church. In her *Autobiography* she describes her experience as follows:—

‘The spirit of prayer was nourished and increased from their contrivances and endeavours to disallow me any time for practising it. I loved without motive or reason for loving; for nothing passed in my head, but much in the innermost of my soul. I thought not about any recompence, gift, or favour, or anything which regards the lover. The Well-beloved was the only object which attracted my heart wholly to Himself. I could not contemplate His attributes. I knew nothing else but to *love* and to *suffer*. Oh, ignorance more truly learned than any science of the Doctors, since it so well taught me Jesus Christ crucified, and brought me to be in love with His holy cross! In its beginning I was attracted with so much force, that it seemed as if my head was going to join my heart. I found that insensibly my body bent in spite of me. I did not then comprehend from whence it came; but have learned since, that as all passed in the will, which is the sovereign of the powers, *that* attracted the others after it, and reunited them in God, their divine centre and sovereign happiness. And as

these powers were then unaccustomed to be united, it required the more violence to effect that union. Wherefore it was the more perceived. Afterwards it became so strongly riveted as to seem to be quite natural. This was so strong that I could have wished to die, in order to be inseparably united without any interstice to Him who so powerfully attracted my heart. As all passed in the will, the imagination and the understanding being absorbed in it, in a union of enjoyment, I knew not what to say, having never read or heard of such a state as I experienced; for, before this, I had known nothing of the operations of God in souls. I had only read *Philothea* (written by St. Francis de Sales), with the *Imitation of Christ* (by Thomas à Kempis), and the Holy Scriptures; also the *Spiritual Combat*, which mentions none of these things.’⁴

In this extract she describes strange physical sensations as accompanying her inward emotion. The intense excitement of the soul assumes, in her over-strained and secluded imagination, the character of a corporeal seizure. The sickly frame, so morbidly sensitive, appears to participate in the supernatural influences communicated to the spirit. On a subsequent occasion, she speaks of herself as so oppressed by the fulness of the Divine manifestations imparted to her, as to be compelled to loosen her dress. More than once some of those who sat next her imagined that they perceived a certain marvellous efflux of grace proceeding from her to themselves. She believed that many persons, for whom she was interceding with great fervour, were sensible at the time of an extraordinary gracious influence instantaneously vouchsafed, and that her spirit communicated mysteriously, ‘in the Lord,’ with the spirits of those dear to her when far away. She traced a special intervention of Providence in the fact, that she repeatedly ‘felt a strong draught to the door’ just when it was necessary to go out to

⁴ *Autobiography*, chap. xii. p. 87.

receive a secret letter from her friend, Mère Granger ; that the rain should have held up precisely when she was on her road to or from mass ; and that at the very intervals when she was able to steal out to hear it, some priest was always found performing, or ready to perform the service, though at a most unusual hour.⁵

v.

Imaginary as all this may have been, the Church of Rome, at least, had no right to brand with the stigma of extravagance any such transference of the spiritual to the sensuous, of the metaphysical to the physical. The fancies of Madame Guyon in this respect are innocent enough in comparison with the monstrosities devised by Romish marvel-mongers to exalt her saints withal. St. Philip Neri was so inflamed with love to God as to be insensible to all cold, and burned with such a fire of devotion that his body, divinely feverish, could not be cooled by exposure to the wildest winter night. For two-and-fifty years he was the subject of a supernatural palpitation, which kept his bed and chair, and everything moveable about him, in a perpetual tremble. For that space of time his breast was miraculously swollen to the thickness of a fist above his heart. On a post-mortem examination of the holy corpse, it was found that two of the ribs had been broken, to allow the sacred ardour of his heart more room to play ! The doctors swore solemnly that the phenomenon could be nothing less than a miracle. A divine hand had thus literally ‘enlarged the heart’ of the devotee.⁶ St. Philip enjoyed, with many other saints, the privilege of being miraculously elevated into the air by the fervour of his heavenward aspirations. The *Acta Sanctorum* relates how Ida of Louvain—seized with an overwhelming desire to present her gifts with the Wise Men to the child Jesus—received, on the eve of the Three Kings, the dis-

⁵ See second Note on p. 238. ⁶ Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, b. iv. c. i.

tinguished favour of being permitted to swell to a terrific size, and then gradually to return to her original dimensions. On another occasion, she was gratified by being thrown down in the street in an ecstasy, and enlarging so that her horror-stricken attendant had to embrace her with all her might to keep her from bursting. The noses of eminent saints have been endowed with so subtle a sense that they have detected the stench of concealed sins, and enjoyed, as a literal fragrance, the well-known odour of sanctity. St. Philip Neri was frequently obliged to hold his nose and turn away his head when confessing very wicked people. In walking the streets of some depraved Italian town, the poor man must have endured all the pains of Coleridge in Cologne, where, he says,

‘ I counted two-and-seventy stenches,
All well-defined, and several stinks!’

Maria of Oignys received what theurgic mysticism calls the gift of jubilation. For three days and nights upon the point of death, she sang without remission her ecstatic swan-song, at the top of a voice whose hoarseness was miraculously healed. She felt as though the wing of an angel were spread upon her breast, thrilling her heart with the rapture, and pouring from her lips the praises, of the heavenly world. With the melodious modulation of an inspired recitative, she descanted on the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation—improvised profound expositions of the Scripture—invoked the saints, and interceded for her friends.⁷ A nun who visited Catharina Ricci in her ecstasy, saw with amazement her face transformed into the likeness of the Redeemer’s countenance. St. Hildegard, in the enjoyment and description of her visions, and in the utterance of her prophecies, was inspired with a complete theological terminology hitherto unknown to mortals. A glossary of the divine tongue

⁷ Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, pp. 70-73.

was long preserved among her manuscripts at Wiesbaden.⁸ It is recorded in the life of St. Veronica of Binasco, that she received the miraculous gift of tears in a measure so copious, that the spot where she knelt appeared as though a jug of water had been overset there. She was obliged to have an earthen vessel ready in her cell to receive the supernatural efflux, which filled it frequently to the weight of several Milan pounds ! Ida of Nivelles, when in an ecstasy one day, had it revealed to her that a dear friend was at the same moment in the same condition. The friend also was simultaneously made aware that Ida was immersed in the same abyss of divine light with herself. Thenceforward they were as one soul in the Lord, and the Virgin Mary appeared to make a third in the saintly fellowship. Ida was frequently enabled to communicate with spiritual personages, without words, after the manner of angelic natures. On one occasion, when at a distance from a priest to whom she was much attached, both she and the holy man were entranced at the same time ; and, when wrapt to heaven, he beheld her in the presence of Christ, at whose command she communicated to him, by a spiritual kiss, a portion of the grace with which she herself had been so richly endowed. To Clara of Montfaucon allusion has already been made. In the right side of her heart was found, completely formed, a little figure of Christ upon the cross, about the size of a thumb. On the left, under what resembled the bloody cloth, lay the instruments of the passion—the crown of thorns, the nails, &c. So sharp was the miniature lance, that the Vicar-General Berengarius, commissioned to assist at the examination by the Bishop of Spoleto, pricked therewith his reverend finger. This marvel was surpassed in the eighteenth century by a miracle more piquant still. Veronica Giuliani caused a drawing to be made of the many forms and letters which she declared had been supernaturally modelled

⁸ Specimens of the language may be seen in Görres, p. 152.

within her heart. To the exultation of the faithful—and the everlasting confusion of all Jews, Protestants, and Turks—a post-mortem examination disclosed the accuracy of her description, to the minutest point. There were the sacred initials in a large and distinct Roman character, the crown of thorns, two flames, seven swords, the spear, the reed, &c.—all arranged just as in the diagram she had furnished.⁹ The diocese of Liège was edified, in the twelfth century, by seeing, in the person of the celebrated Christina Mirabilis, how completely the upward tendency of protracted devotion might vanquish the law of gravitation. So strongly was she drawn away from this gross earth, that the difficulty was to keep her on the ground. She was continually flying up to the tops of lonely towers and trees, there to enjoy a rapture with the angels, and a roost with the birds. In the frequency, the elevation, and the duration of her ascents into the air, she surpassed even the high-flown devotion of St. Peter of Alcantara, who was often seen suspended high above the fig-trees which overshadowed his hermitage at Badajoz—his eyes upturned, his arms outspread—while the servant sent to summon him to dinner, gazed with open mouth, and sublunary cabbage cooled below. The limbs of Christina lost the rigidity, as her body lost the grossness, common to vulgar humanity. In her ecstasies she was contracted into the spherical form—her head was drawn inward and downward towards her breast, and she rolled up like a hedgehog. When her relatives wished to take and secure her, they had to employ a man to hunt her like a bird. Having started his game, he had a long run across country before he brought her down, in a very unsportsmanlike manner, by a stroke with his bludgeon which broke her shin. When a few miracles had been wrought to vindicate her aërostatic mission, she was allowed to fly about in peace.¹⁰ She has occupied, ever since, the first place in the ornithology

⁹ Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, pp. 465, &c.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 532, &c.

of Roman-catholic saintship. Such are a few of the specimens which might be collected in multitudes from Romanist records, showing how that communion has bestowed its highest favour on the most coarse and materialised apprehensions of spiritual truth. Extravagant inventions such as these—monstrous as the adventures of Baron Munchausen, without their wit—have been invested with the sanction and defended by the thunder of the Papal chair. Yet this very Church of Rome incarcerated Molinos and Madame Guyon as dangerous enthusiasts.

VI.

Madame Guyon had still some lessons to learn. On a visit to Paris, the glittering equipages of the park, and the gaities of St. Cloud, revived the old love of seeing and being seen. During a tour in the provinces with her husband, flattering visits and graceful compliments everywhere followed such beauty, such accomplishments, and such virtue, with a delicate and intoxicating applause. Vanity—dormant, but not dead—awoke within her for the last time. She acknowledged, with bitter self-reproach, the power of the world, the weakness of her own resolves. In the spiritual desertion which ensued, she recognised the displeasure of her Lord, and was wretched. She applied to confessors—they were miserable comforters, all of them. They praised her while she herself was filled with self-loathing. She estimated the magnitude of her sins by the greatness of the favour which had been shown her. The bland worldliness of her religious advisers could not blind so true a heart, or pacify so wakeful a conscience. She found relief only in a repentant renewal of her self-dedication to the Saviour, in renouncing for ever the last remnant of confidence in any strength of her own.

It was about this period that she had a remarkable conversation with a beggar, whom she found upon a bridge, as, followed by her footman, she was walking one day to church.

This singular mendicant refused her offered alms—spoke to her of God and divine things—and then of her own state, her devotion, her trials, and her faults. He declared that God required of her not merely to labour as others did to secure their salvation, that they might escape the pains of hell, but to aim at such perfection and purity in this life, as to escape those of purgatory. She asked him who he was. He replied, that he had formerly been a beggar, but now was such no more;—mingled with the stream of people, and she never saw him afterwards.¹¹

The beauty of Madame Guyon had cost her tender conscience many a pang. She had wept and prayed over that secret love of display which had repeatedly induced her to mingle with the thoughtless amusements of the world. At four-and-twenty the virulence of the small-pox released her from that snare. M. Guyon was laid up with the gout. She was left, when the disorder seized her, to the tender mercies of her mother-in-law. That inhuman woman refused to allow any but her own physician to attend her, yet for him she would not send. The disease, unchecked, had reached its height, when a medical man, passing that way, happened to call at the house. Shocked at the spectacle Madame Guyon presented, he was proceeding at once to bleed her, expressing, in no measured terms, his indignation at the barbarity of such neglect. The mother-in-law would not hear of such a thing. He performed the operation in spite of her threats and invectives, leaving her almost beside herself with rage. That lancet saved the life of Madame Guyon, and disappointed the relative who had hoped to see her die. When at length she recovered, she refused to avail herself of the cosmetics generally used to conceal the ravages of the disorder. Throughout her suffering she had never uttered a murmur, or felt a fear. She had even concealed the cruelty of her mother-in-law. She said, that if God had designed her to retain her beauty, He would not have sent the scourge to

¹¹ See Note on p. 239.

remove it. Her friends expected to find her inconsolable—they heard her speak only of thankfulness and joy. Her confessor reproached her with spiritual pride. The affection of her husband was visibly diminished; yet the heart of Madame Guyon overflowed with joy. It appeared to her, that the God to whom she longed to be wholly given up had accepted her surrender, and was removing everything that might interpose between Himself and her.¹²

VII.

The experience of Madame Guyon, hitherto, had been such as to teach her the surrender of every earthly source of gratification or ground of confidence. Yet one more painful stage on the road to self-annihilation remained to be traversed. She must learn to give up cheerfully even spiritual pleasures. In the year 1674, according to the probable calculation of Mr. Upham, she was made to enter what she terms a state of desolation, which lasted, with little intermission, for nearly seven years.¹³ All was emptiness, darkness, sorrow. She describes herself as cast down, like Nebuchadnezzar, from a throne of enjoyment, to live among the beasts. ‘Alas!’ she exclaimed, ‘is it possible that this heart, formerly all on fire, should now become like ice?’ The heavens were as brass, and shut out her prayers; horror and trembling took the place of tranquillity; hopelessly oppressed with guilt, she saw herself a victim destined for hell. In vain for her did the church doors open, the holy bells ring, the deep-voiced intonations of the priest arise and fall, the chanted psalm ascend through clouds of azure wandering incense. The power and the charm of the service had departed. Of what avail was music to a burning wilderness athirst for rain? Gladly would she have had recourse to the vow, to the pilgrimage, to the penance, to any extremity of

¹² *Autobiography*, part I. c. xv.

¹³ See Note on p. 240.

self-torture. She felt the impotence of such remedies for such anguish. She had no ear for comfort, no eye for hope, not even a voice for complaint.

During this period the emotional element of religion in her mind appears to have suffered an almost entire suspension. Regarding the loss of certain feelings of delight as the loss of the divine favour, she naturally sank deeper and deeper in despondency. A condition by no means uncommon in ordinary Christian experience assumed, in her case, a morbid character. Our emotions may be chilled, or kindled, in ever-varying degrees, from innumerable causes. We must accustom ourselves to the habitual performance of duty, whether attended or not with feelings of a pleasurable nature. It is generally found that those powerful emotions of joy which attend, at first, the new and exalting consciousness of peace with God, subside after awhile. As we grow in religious strength and knowledge, a steady principle supplies their place. We are refreshed, from time to time, by seasons of heightened joy and confidence, but we cease to be dependent upon feeling. At the same time, there is nothing in Scripture to check our desire for retaining as constantly as possible a sober gladness, for finding duty delightful, and the 'joy of the Lord' our strength. These are the truths which the one-sided and unqualified expressions of Madame Guyon at once exaggerate and obscure.

During this dark interval M. Guyon died. His widow undertook the formidable task of settling his disordered affairs. Her brother gave her no assistance ; her mother-in-law harassed and hindered to her utmost ; yet Madame Guyon succeeded in arranging a chaos of papers, and bringing a hopeless imbroglio of business matters into order, with an integrity and a skill which excited universal admiration. She felt it was her duty ; she believed that Divine assistance was vouchsafed for its discharge. Of business, she says, she knew as little as of Arabic ;

but she knew not what she could accomplish till she tried. Minds far more visionary than hers have evinced a still greater aptitude for practical affairs.

The 22nd of July, 1680, is celebrated by Madame Guyon as the happy era of her deliverance. A letter from La Combe was the instrument of a restoration as wonderful, in her eyes, as the bondage. This ecclesiastic had been first introduced by Madame Guyon into the path of mystical perfection. His name is associated with her own in the early history of the Quietist movement. He subsequently became her Director, but was always more her disciple than her guide. His admiration for her amounted to a passion. Incessant persecution and long solitary imprisonment combined, with devotional extravagance, to cloud with insanity at last an intellect never powerful. This feeble and affectionate soul perished, the victim of Quietism, and perhaps of love. It should not be forgotten, that before the inward condition of Madame Guyon changed thus remarkably for the better, her outward circumstances had undergone a similar improvement. She lived now in her own house, with her children about her. That Sycorax, her mother-in-law, dropped gall no longer into her daily cup of life. Domestic tormentors, worse than the goblins which buffeted St. Antony, assailed her peace no more. An outer sky grown thus serene, an air thus purified, may well have contributed to chase away the night of the soul, and to give to a few words of kindly counsel from La Combe the brightness of the day-star. Our simple-hearted enthusiast was not so absolutely indifferent as she thought herself to the changes of this transitory world.

VIII.

Madame Guyon had now triumphantly sustained the last of those trials, which, like the probation of the ancient mysteries, made the porch of mystical initiation a passage terrible with pain

and peril. Henceforward, she is the finished Quietist : henceforward, when she relates her own experience, she describes Quietism. At times, when the children did not require her care, she would walk out into a neighbouring wood, and there, under the shade of the trees, amidst the singing of the birds, she now passed as many happy hours as she had known months of sorrow. Her own language will best indicate the thoughts which occupied this peaceful retirement, and exhibit the principle there deepened and matured. She says here in her Autobiography—

‘ When I had lost all created supports, and even divine ones, I then found myself happily necessitated to fall into the pure divine, and to fall into it through all which seemed to remove me farther from it. In losing all the gifts, with all their supports, I found the Giver. Oh, poor creatures, who pass along all your time in feeding on the gifts of God, and think therein to be most favoured and happy, how I pity you if ye stop here, short of the true rest, and cease to go forward to God, through resignation of the same gifts ! How many pass all their lives this way, and think highly of themselves therein ! There are others who, being designed of God to die to themselves, yet pass all their time in a dying life, and in inward agonies, without ever entering into God through death and total loss, because they are always willing to retain something under plausible pretexts, and so never lose *self* to the whole extent of the designs of God. Wherefore, they never enjoy God in his fulness,—a loss that will not perfectly be known until another life.’¹⁴

She describes herself as having ceased from all self-originated action and choice. To her amazement and unspeakable happiness, it appeared as though all such natural movement existed no longer,—a higher power had displaced and occupied its

¹⁴ *Autobiography*, part I. c. xxviii. p. 168.

room. 'I even perceived no more (she continues) the soul which He had formerly conducted by His rod and His staff, because now He alone appeared to me, my soul having given up its place to Him. It seemed to me as if it was wholly and altogether passed into its God, to make but one and the same thing with Him; even as a little drop of water cast into the sea receives the qualities of the sea.' She speaks of herself as now practising the virtues no longer *as virtues*—that is, not by separate and constrained efforts. It would have required effort *not* to practise them.¹⁵

Somewhat later she expresses herself as follows :—

'The soul passing out of itself by dying to itself necessarily passes into its divine object. This is the law of its transition. When it passes out of self, which is limited, and therefore is not God, and consequently is *evil*, it necessarily passes into the unlimited and universal, which is God, and therefore is the true good. My own experience seemed to me to be a verification of this. My spirit, disenthralled from selfishness, became united with and lost in God, its Sovereign, who attracted it more and more to Himself. And this was so much the case, that I could seem to see and know God only, and not myself. . . . It was thus that my soul was lost in God, who communicated to it His qualities, having drawn it out of all that it had of its own. . . . O happy poverty, happy loss, happy nothing, which gives no less than God Himself in his own immensity,—no more circumscribed to the limited manner of the creation, but always drawing it out of that to plunge it wholly into His divine Essence. Then the soul knows that all the states of self-

¹⁵ This spontaneity she likens to a fountain, as compared with a pump; love in the heart prompts every issue of life: outward occasions and stimulants are no longer awaited; and a glad inward readiness gives facility in every duty, patience under every trial.

Such also is the teaching of Fénelon here—the genuine doctrine of spiritual life. But the enemies of Quietism were not slow to represent this 'practising the virtues no longer as virtues,' as a dangerous pretence for evading the obligations of virtue altogether.

pleasing visions, of intellectual illuminations, of ecstasies and raptures, of whatever value they might once have been, are now rather obstacles than advancements ; and that they are not of service in the state of experience which is far above them ; because the state which has props or supports, which is the case with the merely illuminated and ecstatic state, rests in them in some degree, and has pain to lose them. But the soul cannot arrive at the state of which I am now speaking, without the loss of all such supports and helps. . . . The soul is then so submissive, and perhaps we may say so passive,—that is to say, is so disposed equally to receive from the hand of God either good or evil,—as is truly astonishing. It receives both the one and the other without any selfish emotions, letting them flow and be lost as they came.¹⁶

These passages convey the substance of the doctrine which, illustrated and expressed in various ways, pervades all the writings of Madame Guyon. This is the principle adorned by the fancy of her *Torrents* and inculcated in the practical directions of her *Short Method of Prayer*. Such is the state to which Quietism proposes to conduct its votaries. In some places, she qualifies the strength of her expressions,—she admits that we are not at all times equally conscious of this absolute union of the soul with its centre,—the lower nature may not be always insensible to distress. But the higher, the inmost element of the soul is all the while profoundly calm, and recollection presently imparts a similar repose to the inferior nature. When the soul has thus passed, as she phrases it, out of the Nothing into the All, when its feet are set in 'a large room' (nothing less, according to her interpretation, than the compass of Infinity), 'a substantial or essential word' is spoken there. It is a continuous word—potent, ineffable, ever uttered without language. It is the immediate unchecked operation of resident

¹⁶ Upham, vol. i. pp. 262, 263.

Deity. What it speaks, it effects. It is blissful and mysterious as the language of heaven. With Madame Guyon, the events of Providence are God, and the decisions of the sanctified judgment respecting them are nothing less than the immediate voice of God in the soul. She compares the nature thus at rest in God to a tablet on which the divine hand writes,—it must be held perfectly still, else the characters traced there will be distorted or incomplete. In her very humility she verges on the audacity which arrogates inspiration. If she, passive and helpless, really acts no more, the impulses she feels, her words, her actions, must all bear the impress of an infallible divine sanction. It is easy to see that her speech and action—always well-meant, but frequently ill-judged,—were her own after all, though nothing of her own seemed left. She acknowledges that she was sometimes at a loss as to the course of duty. She was guided more than once by random passages of the Bible, and the casual expressions of others, somewhat after the fashion of the *Sortes Virgilianæ* and the omens of ancient Rome. Her knowledge of Scripture, the native power of her intellect, and the tenderness of her conscience, preserved her from pushing such a view of the inward light to its worst extreme.

IX.

The admixture of error in the doctrine which Madame Guyon was henceforward to preach with so much self-denying love, so much intrepid constancy, appears to us to lie upon the surface. The passages we have given convey, unquestionably, the idea of a practical substitution of God for the soul in the case of the perfectly sanctified. The soul within the soul is Deity. When all is desolate, silent, the divine Majesty arises, thinks, feels, and acts, within the transformed humanity. It is quite true that, as sanctification progresses, Christian virtue becomes more easy as the new habit gains strength. In many respects

it is true, as Madame Guyon says, that effort would be requisite to neglect or violate certain duties or commands rather than to perform them. But this facility results from the constitution of our nature. We carry on the new economy within with less outcry, less labour, less confusion and resistance than we did when the revolution was recent, but we carry it on still—working with divine assistance. God works *in* man, but not *instead* of man. It is one thing to harmonize, in some measure, the human will with the divine, another to substitute divine volitions for the human. Every man has within him Conscience—the judge often bribed or clamoured down; Will—the marshal; Imagination—the poet; Understanding—the student; Desire—the merchant, venturing its store of affection, and gazing out on the future in search of some home-bound argosy of happiness. But all these powers are found untrue to their allegiance. The ermine—the baton—the song—the books—the merchandize, are at the service of a usurper—Sin. When the Spirit renews the mind, there is no massacre—no slaughterous sword filling with death the streets of the soul's city, and making man the ruin of his former self. These faculties are restored to loyalty, and reinstated under God. Then Conscience gives verdict, for the most part, according to the divine statute-book, and is habitually obeyed. Then the lordly Will assumes again a lowly yet noble vassalage. Then the dream of Imagination is a dream no longer, for the reality of heaven transcends it. Then the Understanding burns the magic books in the market-place, and breaks the wand of its curious arts—but studies still, for eternity as well as time. The activity of Desire amasses still, according to its nature,—for *some* treasure man must have. But the treasure is on earth no longer. It is the advantage of such a religion that the very same laws of our being guide our spiritual and our natural life. The same self-controul and watchful diligence which built up

the worldly habits towards the summits of success, may be applied at once to those habits which ripen us for heaven. The old experience will serve. But the mystic can find no common point between himself and other men. He is cut off from them, for he believes he has another constitution of being, inconceivable by them—not merely other tastes and a higher aim. The *object* of Christian love may be incomprehensible, but the affection itself is not so. It is dangerous to represent it as a mysterious and almost unaccountable sentiment, which finds no parallel in our experience elsewhere. Our faith in Christ, as well as our love to Christ, are similar to our faith and love as exercised towards our fellow-creatures. Regeneration imparts no new faculty, it gives only a new direction to the old.

X.

Quietism opposed to the mercenary religion of the common and consistent Romanism around it, the doctrine of disinterested love. Revolting from the coarse machinery of a corrupt system, it took refuge in an unnatural refinement. The love inculcated in Scripture is equally remote from the impracticable indifference of Quietism and the commercial principle of Superstition. Long ago, at Alexandria, Philo endeavoured to escape from an effete and carnal Judaism to a similar elevation. The Persian Sufis were animated with the same ambition in reaction against the frigid legalism of the creed of Islam. Extreme was opposed to extreme, in like manner, when Quietism, disgusted with the unblushing inconsistencies of nominal Christianity, proclaimed its doctrine of *perfection*—of complete sanctification by faith. This is not a principle peculiar to mysticism. It is of little practical importance. It is difficult to see how it can be applied to individual experience. The man who has reached such a state of purity must be the last to know it. If we do not, by some strange confusion of thought, identify ourselves with God,

the nearer we approach Him the more profoundly must we be conscious of our distance. As, in a still water, we may see reflected the bird that sings in an overhanging tree, and the bird that soars towards the zenith—the image deepest as the ascent is highest—so it is with our approximation to the Infinite Holiness. Madame Guyon admits that she found it necessary jealously to guard humility, to watch and pray—that her state was only of ‘*comparative* immutability.’ It appears to us that perfection is prescribed as a goal ever to be approached, but ever practically inaccessible. Whatever degree of sanctification any one may have attained, it must always be possible to conceive of a state yet more advanced,—it must always be a duty diligently to labour towards it.

Quietist as she was, few lives have been more busy than that of Madame Guyon with the activities of an indefatigable benevolence. It was only self-originated action which she strove to annihilate. In her case, especially, Quietism contained a reformatory principle. Genuflexions and crossings were of little value in comparison with inward abasement and crucifixion. The prayers repeated by rote in the oratory, were immeasurably inferior to that Prayer of Silence she so strongly commends—that prayer which, unlimited to times and seasons, unhindered by words, is a state rather than an act, a sentiment rather than a request,—a continuous sense of submission, which breathes, moment by moment, from the serene depth of the soul, ‘Thy will be done.’¹⁷

¹⁷ This Prayer of Silence became hers at an early period in her religious career, not as the result of direct effort in pursuance of a theory, but simply as the consequence of overpowering emotion. She says, ‘I had a secret desire given me from that time to be wholly devoted to the disposal of my God, let it be what it would. I said, ‘What couldst Thou demand of me, that I would not

willingly sacrifice or offer Thee? Oh, spare me not.’ I could scarce hear speak of God, or our Lord Jesus Christ, without being almost ravished out of myself. What surprised me the most, was the great difficulty I had to say the vocal prayers I had been used to say. As soon as I opened my lips to pronounce them, the love of God seized me so strongly that I was swallowed up.

As contrasted with the mysticism of St. Theresa, that of Madame Guyon appears to great advantage. She guards her readers against attempting to form any image of God. She aspires to an intellectual elevation—a spiritual intuition, above the sensuous region of theurgy, of visions, and of dreams. She saw no Jesuits in heaven bearing white banners among the heavenly throng of the redeemed. She beheld no Devil, ‘like a little negro,’ sitting on her breviary. She did not see the Saviour in an ecstasy, drawing the nail out of His hand. She felt no large white dove fluttering above her head. But she did not spend her days in founding convents—a slave to the interests of the clergy. So they made a saint of Theresa, and a confessor of Madame Guyon.

XI.

In the summer of 1681, Madame Guyon, now thirty-four years of age, quitted Paris for Gex, a town lying at the foot of the Jura, about twelve miles from Geneva. It was arranged that she should take some part in the foundation and management of a new religious and charitable institution there. A period of five years was destined to elapse before her return to the capital. During this interval, she resided successively at Gex, Thonon, Turin, and Grenoble. Wherever she went, she was indefatigable in works of charity, and also in the diffusion of her peculiar doctrines concerning self-abandonment and

in a profound silence, and a peace not to be expressed. I made fresh essays, but still in vain. I began, but could not go on. And as I had never before heard of such a state, I knew not what to do. My inability therein still increased, because my love to God was still growing more strong, more violent, and more overpowering. There was made in me, without the sound of words, a continual prayer, which seemed to me to be the prayer of our

Lord Jesus Christ Himself; a prayer of the Word, which is made by the Spirit, which, according to St. Paul, ‘asketh for us that which is good, perfect, and conformable to the will of God.’—*Autobiography*, part I. c. xiii.

Here we find genuine devout fervour, emancipating itself, very naturally in private, from allotted forms of prayer; but no mysticism, till we come to the last sentence—even that, admitting a favourable explanation.

disinterested love. Strong in the persuasion of her mission, she could not rest without endeavouring to influence the minds around her. The singular charm of her conversation won a speedy ascendancy over nearly all with whom she came in contact. It is easy to see how a remarkable natural gift in this direction contributed both to the attempt and the success. But the Quietest had buried nature, and to nature she would owe nothing,—these conversational powers could be, in her eyes, only a special gift of utterance from above. This mistake reminds us of the story of certain monks upon whose cloister garden the snow never lay, though all the country round was buried in the rigour of a northern winter. The marvellous exemption, long attributed by superstition to miracle, was discovered to arise simply from certain thermal springs which had their source within the sacred inclosure. It is thus that the warmth and vivacity of natural temperament has been commonly regarded by the mystic, as nothing less than a fiery impartation from the altar of the celestial temple.

At Thonon her apartment was visited by a succession of applicants from every class, who laid bare their hearts before her, and sought from her lips spiritual guidance or consolation. She met them separately and in groups, for conference and for prayer. At Grenoble, she says she was for some time engaged from six o'clock in the morning till eight at evening in speaking of God to all sorts of persons,—‘friars, priests, men of the world, maids, wives, widows, all came, one after another, to hear what I had to say.’¹⁸ Her efforts among the members of

¹⁸ *Autobiography*, part II. c. xvii. ‘God supplied me,’ she adds, ‘with what was pertinent and satisfactory to them all, after a wonderful manner, without any share of my study or meditation therein. Nothing was hid from me of their interior state, and of what passed within them. Here, O my God! thou madest an infinite number of conquests, known

to Thyself only. They were instantly furnished with a wonderful facility of prayer. God conferred on them His grace plentifully, and wrought marvellous changes in them. The most advanced of these souls found, when with me, in silence, a grace communicated to them, which they could neither comprehend nor cease to admire. The

the House of the Novitiates in that city, were eminently successful, and she appears to have been of real service to many who had sought peace in vain, by the austerities and the routine of monastic seclusion. Meanwhile, she was active, both at Thonon and Grenoble, in the establishment of hospitals. She carried on a large and continually increasing correspondence. In the former place she wrote her *Torrents*, in the latter, she published her *Short Method of Prayer*, and commenced her *Commentaries on the Bible*.¹⁹

But alas! all this earnest, tireless toil is unauthorized.

others found an unction in my words, and that they operated in them what I said to them. They said they had never experienced anything like it. Friars of different orders, and priests of merit, came to see me, to whom our Lord granted very great favours, as indeed he did to all without exception, who came in sincerity. One thing was surprising, and that was, that I had not a word to say to such as came only to watch my words and to criticise them. Even when I thought to try to speak to them, I felt that I could not, and that God would not have me do it. I felt that what I spoke flowed from the fountain, and that I was only the instrument of Him who made me speak.'—P. 86.

¹⁹ The little book to which she gave the name of *The Torrents*, was written, she tells us, at the suggestion of La Combe. When she took up her pen she knew not what she was to say, but soon came thoughts and words abundantly—as, indeed, they were sure to do. She compares the different kinds of spiritual progress to the mountain streams she had seen hurrying down the sides of the Alps. She describes the varieties in the gravitation of devout souls toward God—the ocean which they seek. Some proceed slowly, by means of meditations, austerities, and works of charity,—dependent mostly on outward appliances,—deficient in

spontaneity and ardour,—little exercised by inward experience. Another class flow in a fuller stream,—grow into laden rivers—haste with more strength and speed; but these are apt to dwell, with too much complacency, on those rich gifts for which they are conspicuous. A third order (and to these she herself belonged) dash out from the poverty of the rocks, impetuous, leaping over every obstacle, unburdened by wealthy freightage, inglorious in the eyes of men, but simple, naked, self-emptied, with resistless eagerness foaming up out of abysmal chasms that seemed to swallow them, and finding, soonest of all, that Sea divine, wherein all rivers rest.

Her commentaries on Scripture were written with extraordinary rapidity. The fact that she consulted no book except the Bible in their composition must doubtless have contributed to their speed: certainly not, as she fancied, to their excellence. No writers are so diffuse as the mystics, because no others have written so fast, imagining headlong haste an attribute of inspiration. The transcriber could not copy in five days what she had written in one night. We may conjecture that the man must have been paid by the day. The commentary on the Canticles was written in a day and a half, and several visits received beside.—*Autobiography*, part II. c. xxi.

Bigotry takes the alarm, and cries the Church is in danger. Priests who were asleep—priests who were place-hunting—priests who were pleasure-hunting, awoke from their doze, or drew breath in their chase, to observe this woman whose life rebuked them—to observe and to assail her ; for rebuke, in their terminology, was scandal. Persecution hemmed her in on every side ; no annoyance was too petty, no calumny too gross, for priestly jealousy. The inmates of the religious community she had enriched were taught to insult her—tricks were devised to frighten her by horrible appearances and unearthly noises—her windows were broken—her letters were intercepted. Thus, before a year had elapsed, she was driven from Gex. Some called her a sorceress ; others, more malignant yet, stigmatized her as half a Protestant. She had indeed recommended the reading of the Scriptures to all, and spoken slightly of mere bowing and bead-counting. Monstrous contumacy—said, with one voice, spiritual slaves and spiritual slave-owners—that a woman desired by her bishop to do one thing, should discover an inward call to do another. At Thonon the priests burnt in the public square all the books they could find treating of the inner life, and went home elated with their performance. One thought may have embittered their triumph—had it only been living flesh instead of mere paper ! She inhabited a poor cottage that stood by itself in the fields, at some distance from Thonon. Attached to it was a little garden, in the management of which she took pleasure. One night a rabble from the town were incited to terrify her with their drunken riot,—they trampled down and laid waste the garden, hurled stones in at the windows, and shouted their threats, insults, and curses, round the house the whole night. Then came an episcopal order to quit the diocese. When compelled subsequently, by the opposition she encountered, to withdraw secretly from Grenoble, she was advised to take refuge at Marseilles. She

arrived in that city at ten o'clock in the morning, but that very afternoon all was in uproar against her, so vigilant and implacable were her enemies.

NOTE TO PAGE 214.

Autobiography, chapp. viii. and x. In describing her state of mind at this time, she says,—‘This immersion in God immersed all things. I could no more see the saints, nor even the blessed Virgin, out of God; but I beheld them all in Him. And though I tenderly loved certain saints, as St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Theresa, with all those who were spiritual, yet I could not form to myself images of them, nor invoke any of them out of God.’ Here a genuine religious fervour, described in the language of mystical theology, has overcome superstition, and placed her, unconsciously, in a position similar to that of Molinos with regard to these professedly subordinate objects of Romanist worship. It may be observed, in passing, that while Rome pretends to subordinate saint-worship, she denounces those of her children who really do so, as heretical, *i.e.*, reformatory, in their tendency.

Madame Guyon was enabled at this period to enjoy a habitual inward prayer,—‘a prayer of rejoicing and possession, wherein the taste of God was so great, so pure, unblended, and uninterrupted, that it drew and absorbed the powers of the soul into a profound recollection, without act or discourse. For I had now no sight but of Jesus Christ alone. All else was excluded, in order to love with the greater extent, without any selfish motives or reasons for loving.’ With much good sense, she declares this continual and immediate sense of the Divine presence far safer and higher than the sensible relish of ecstasies and ravishments,—than distinct interior words or revelations of things to come,—so often imaginary, so apt to divert our desires from the Giver to the gifts;—this is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which makes us new creatures, the manifestation of the Word within us, who cannot deceive,—the life of true and naked faith, which darkens all self-pleasing lights, and reveals the minutest faults, that pure love may reign in the centre of the soul. Thus, while inheriting the phraseology of the mystics (and we discern in these accounts of her early experience the influence of her later readings in mystical theology), she is less sensuous than Theresa, less artificial than Jolin. Like the latter, she assigns to love the office of annihilating the will, to faith that of absorbing the understanding, ‘so as to make it decline all reasonings, all particular brightnesses and illustrations.’ The Annihilation of the Will, or the Union in the Will of God, consists, with her, simply in a state of complete docility, the soul yielding itself up to be emptied of all which is its own, till it finds itself by little and little detached from every self-originated motion, and placed ‘in a holy indifference for willing;—wishing nothing but what God does and wills.’—P. 70.

NOTE TO PAGE 218.

She describes herself, when at Thonon, as causing sundry devils to withdraw with a word. But the said devils, like some other sights and sounds which terrified her there, were probably the contrivance of the monks who persecuted her, with whom expertness in such tricks was doubtless reckoned among the accomplishments of sanctity. When at the same place (she was then a little past thirty), Madame Guyon believed that a certain virtue was vouchsafed her—a gift

of spiritual and sometimes of bodily healing, dependent, however, for its successful operation, on the degree of susceptibility in the recipients.—*Autobiography*, part II. c. xii.

There also she underwent some of her most painful and mysterious experiences with regard to Father La Combe. She says,—‘Our Lord gave me, with the weaknesses of a child, such a power over souls, that with a word I put them in pain or in peace, as was necessary for their good. I saw that God made Himself to be obeyed, in and through me, like an absolute Sovereign. I neither resisted Him nor took part in anything. . . . Our Lord had given us both (herself and La Combe) to understand that He would unite us by faith and by the cross. Ours, then, has been a union of the cross in every respect, as well as by what I have made him suffer, as by what I have suffered for him. . . . The sufferings which I have had on his account were such as to reduce me sometimes to extremity, which continued for several years. For though I have been much more of my time far from him than near him, that did not relieve my suffering, which continued till he was perfectly emptied of himself, and to the very point of submission which God required of him. . . . He hath occasioned me cruel pains when I was near a hundred leagues from him. I felt his disposition. If he was faithful in letting SELF be destroyed, I was in a state of peace and enlargement. If he was unfaithful in reflection or hesitation, I suffered till that was passed over. He had no need to write me an account of his condition, for I knew it; but when he did write, it proved to be such as I had felt it.’—*Ibid.* p. 51.

She says that frequently, when Father La Combe came to confess her, she could not speak a word to him; she felt take place within her the same silence toward him, which she had experienced in regard to God. I understood, she adds, that God wished to teach me that the language of angels might be learnt by men on earth,—that is, converse without words. She was gradually reduced to this wordless communication alone, in her interviews with La Combe; and they imagined that they understood each other, ‘in a manner ineffable and divine.’ She regarded the use of speech, or of the pen, as a kind of accommodation on her part to the weakness of souls not sufficiently advanced for these internal communications.

Here Madame Guyon anticipates the Quakers. Compare Barclay’s *Apology*, Prop. xi. §§ 6, 7.

Shortly after her arrival in Paris, she describes herself as favoured, from the plenitude which filled her soul, with ‘a discharge on her best-disposed children to their mutual joy and comfort, and not only when present, but sometimes when absent.’ ‘I even felt it,’ she adds, ‘to flow from me into their souls. When they wrote to me, they informed me that at such times they had received abundant infusions of divine grace.’—*Ibid.* part III. c. i.

NOTE TO PAGE 223.

Autobiography, part I. c. xiii. Here Madame Guyon has found confessors blind guides, and confessions profitless; and furthermore, she is encouraged and instructed in the inward life by a despised layman. There is every reason to believe that the experience of Madame Guyon, and the doctrines of the beggar, were shared to some extent by many more. Madame Guyon speaks as Theresa does of the internal pains of the soul as equivalent to those of purgatory. (c. xi.) The teaching of the quondam mendicant concerning an internal and present instead of a future purgatory, was not in itself contrary to the declarations of orthodox mysticism. But many were beginning to seek in this perfectionist doctrine a refuge from the exactions of the priesthood. With creatures of the clergy like

Theresa, or with monks like John of the Cross, such a tenet would be retained within the limits required by the ecclesiastical interest. It might stimulate religious zeal—it would never intercept religious obedience. But it was not always so among the people—it was not so with many of the followers of Molinos. The jealous vigilance of priestcraft saw that it had everything to fear from a current belief among the laity, that a state of spiritual perfection, rendering purgatory needless, was of possible attainment—might be reached by secret self-sacrifice, in the use of very simple means. If such a notion prevailed, the lucrative traffic of indulgences might totter on the verge of bankruptcy. No devotee would impoverish himself to buy exemption hereafter from a purifying process which he believed himself now experiencing, in the hourly sorrows he patiently endured. It was at least possible—it had been known to happen, that the soul which struggled to escape itself—to rise beyond the gifts of God, to God—to ascend, beyond words and means, to repose in Him,—which desired only the Divine will, feared only the Divine displeasure,—which sought to ignore so utterly its own capacity and power, might come to attach paramount importance no longer to the powers of the priesthood and the ritual of the Church. Those aspirations which had been the boast of Rome in the few, became her terror in the many. The Quietest might believe himself sincere in orthodoxy, might choose him a director, and might reverence the sacraments. But such abasement and such ambition—distress so deep, and aims so lofty—would often prove alike beyond the reach of the ordinary confessional. The oily syllables of absolution would drop in vain upon the troubled waves of a nature thus stirred to its inmost depths. And if it could receive peace only from the very hand of God, priestly mediation must begin with shame to take a lower place. The value of relics and of masses, of penances and paternosters, would everywhere fall. An absolute indifference to self-interest would induce indifference also to those priestly baits by which that self-interest was allured. Such were the presentiments which urged the Jesuits of Rome to hunt down Molinos, with all the implacability of fear. The craft was in danger. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

NOTE TO PAGE 224.

See the *Life and Religious Opinions and Experience of Madame de la Mothe Guyon*, &c., by Thomas C. Upham, (New York, 1851); vol. i. p. 153. Mr. Upham, in this and in some other parts of his excellent biography, appears to me to have fallen into the same error with Madame Guyon. He perceives her mistake in regarding the absence of joy as evidence of the absence of the divine favour. But he contrasts the state in which we are conscious of alacrity and joy in religion—as one in which we still live comparatively by *sight*, with that condition of privation in which all such enjoyment is withdrawn—a state wherein we are called to live, not by sight, but by pure and naked *faith*. Now, faith and sight are not thus opposed in Scripture. In the New Testament, faith is always practical belief in what God has revealed; and sight, as the opposite course of life, always so much unbelief—undue dependence on things seen and temporal. It is quite true that too much stress should not be laid by us on the intensity or the displays of mere emotion,—since religion is a principle rather than a sentiment. But not a few have been nursed in dangerous delusion by supposing that when they feel within them scarce a trace of any of those desires or dispositions proper to every Christian heart—when they have no glimpse of what they incorrectly term ‘sight’—then is the time to exercise what they suppose to be faith,—that is, to work themselves up to the obstinate persuasion that they personally are still the children of God.

It may well be questioned, moreover, whether we have any scriptural ground

for believing that it is usual with the Almighty, for the growth of our sanctification, to withdraw Himself,—the only source of it. To these supposed hidings of His face Madame Guyon, and every Quietist, would patiently submit, as to the sovereign and inscrutable caprice of the divine Bridegroom of the soul. Rather should we regard such obscurations as originating with ourselves and not with Him, and at once make the lost sense of His gracious nearness the object of humble and earnest search. 'Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation !'

Madame Guyon describes her 'state of total privation' in the twenty-first chapter of the *Autobiography*, part I.

CHAPTER II.

O Mensch wiltu geimpffet werdn,
Und sein versetzt in d'himlisch erdn!
So mustu vor dein ästen wilt,
Gantz hawen ab, das fruchte milt
Fürkommen nach Gotts ebenbildt.¹

HYMN OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Part II.—The Quietist Controversy.

I.

IN the year 1686, Madame Guyon returned to Paris, and entered the head-quarters of persecution. Rumours reached her, doubtless, from beyond the Alps, of cruel measures taken against opinions similar to her own, which had spread rapidly in Italy. But she knew not that all these severities originated with Louis XIV. and his Jesuit advisers,—that her king, while revoking the Edict of Nantes, and dispatching his dragoons to extirpate Protestantism in France, was sending orders to D'Etrees, his ambassador at Rome, to pursue with the utmost rigour Italian Quietism—and that the monarch, who shone and smiled at Marly and Versailles, was crowding with victims the dungeons of the Roman Inquisition.

The leader of Quietism in Italy was one Michael de Molinos, a Spaniard, a man of blameless life, of eminent and comparatively enlightened piety. His book, entitled *The Spiritual Guide*, was published in 1675, sanctioned by five famous doctors, four of them Inquisitors, and one a Jesuit, and passed, within six years, through twenty editions in different languages.

¹ O man, wouldst thou be grafted,
and to the heavenly soil transplanted?
then must thou first thy branches wild

hew quite away, that kindly fruits may
come forth in God's image.

His real doctrine was probably identical in substance with that of Madame Guyon.² It was openly favoured by many nobles and ecclesiastics of distinguished rank ; by D'Etrees among the rest. Molinos had apartments assigned him in the Vatican, and was held in high esteem by Infallibility itself. But the Inquisition and the Jesuits, supported by all the influence of France, were sure of their game. The audacity of the Inquisitors went so far as to send a deputation to examine the orthodoxy of the man called Innocent XI. ; for even the tiara was not to shield the patron of Molinos from suspicions of heresy. The courtier-cardinal D'Etrees found new light in the missives of his master. He stood committed to Quietism. He had not only embraced the opinions of Molinos, but had translated into Italian the book of Malaval, a French Quietist, far more extreme than Molinos himself.³ Yet he became, at a moment's notice, the accuser of his friend. He produced the letter of Louis rebuking the faithless sloth of the pontiff who could entertain a heretic in his palace, while he, the eldest son of the Church, toiled incessantly to root out heresy from the soil of France. He read before the Inquisitorial Tribunal extracts from the papers of Molinos. He protested that he had seemed to receive, in order at the proper juncture more effectually to expose, these abominable mysteries. If these professions were false, D'Etrees was a heretic ; if true, a villain.

² As far as his doctrine differs from that of Madame Guyon, it is for the worse, because he approaches more nearly the extreme language of some of the orthodox mystics in his communion.

³ This Dialogue of Malaval's, which goes much beyond the mysticism of Molinos, was approved by the Sorbonne, and found so conformable to the teachings of St. Theresa, that the translation of it was dedicated to the bare-footed Carmelites. The unob-

trusive and not unqualified mysticism of Molinos was stigmatised by the new epithet of Quietism, and condemned as deadly error. The extravagant and wonder-working mysticism of Theresa was extolled as the angelic life. See the *Account of Molinos and the Quietists*, appended to the *Autobiography* of Madame Guyon : translated, I believe, from a French work, entitled, *Recueil de Diverses Pièces concernant le Quiétisme et les Quiétistes*.

The Inquisitors, of course, deemed his testimony too valuable to be refused. In the eyes of such men, the enormous crime which he pretended was natural, familiar, praiseworthy. Depths of baseness beyond the reach of ordinary iniquity, are heights of virtue with the followers of Dominic and Loyola. Guilt, which even a bad man would account a blot upon his life, becomes, in the annals of their zeal, a star. The Spanish Inquisitor-General, Valdes, who raised to the highest pitch his repute for sanctity, secured the objects of his ambition, averted the dangers which threatened him, and preserved his ill-gotten wealth from the grasp of the crown, simply by his activity as a persecutor, made a practice of sending spies to mix (under pretence of being converts or inquirers) among the suspected Lutherans of Valladolid and Seville. Desmarets de St. Sorlin denounced, and caused to be burnt, a poor harmless madman, named Morin, who fancied himself the Holy Ghost. Counsellor by the Jesuit confessor of Louis, Father Canard, he pretended to become his disciple, and then betrayed him. This Desmarets, be it remembered, had written a book called *Les Délices de l'Esprit*, happily characterised by a French wit, when he proposed for *délices* to read *délires*. Those immoral consequences which the enemies of Madame Guyon professed to discern in her writings are drawn openly in the sensual and blasphemous phraseology of this religious extravaganza. But because Desmarets was a useful man to the Jesuits—because he had drawn away some of the nuns of the Port Royal—because he had given the flames a victim—because he was protected by Canard,—the same Archbishop of Paris who imprisoned Madame Guyon, honoured with his sanction the ravings of the licentious visionary.⁴ So little had any sincere dread of spiritual extravagance to do with the hostility concentrated on the disciples of Quietism. The greater portion of the priest-

⁴ Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 74.

hood feared only lest men should learn to become religious on their own account. The leaders of the movement against Madame Guyon were animated by an additional motive. They knew they should delight his Most Christian Majesty by affording him another opportunity of manifesting his zeal for orthodoxy; and they wished to strike at the reputation of Fénelon through Madame Guyon. The fate of Molinos decided hers, and hers that of the Archbishop of Cambray.

The only crime brought home to the followers of Molinos was a preference for the religion of the heart to that of the rosary; the substitution of a devout retirement for the observance of certain superstitious forms and seasons. His condemnation was determined. After an imprisonment of two years he was exhibited in the Temple of Minerva, his hands bound, and a lighted taper between them. A plenary indulgence was granted to all who should be present; a vast concourse listened to the sentence; hired voices cried, 'To the fire! to the fire!' the mob was stirred to a frenzy of fanaticism. His last gaze upon the world beheld a sea of infuriate faces, the pomp of his triumphant adversaries,—then to the gloom and solitude of the dungeon in which he was to languish till death bestowed release.⁵

II.

At Paris, Madame Guyon became the centre of a small but illustrious circle, who listened with delight to her exposition of that Quietism to which the tender earnestness of her language, and her manner lent so indescribable a charm. There were the Duke and Duchess of Beauvilliers, the Duke and Duchess of Chevreuse, the Duchess of Bethune, and the Countess of Guiche. The daughters of Colbert and of Fouquet forgot the long enmity of their fathers in a religious friendship, whose tie was yet more closely drawn by their common admiration for

⁵ See Note on p. 276.

Madame Guyon.⁶ But letters filled with complaints against La Combe and Madame Guyon poured in upon Harlay, Archbishop of Paris.⁷ He procured the arrest of La Combe, who spent the remainder of his days in various prisons. A little

⁶ *Upham*, vol. ii. pp. 3, &c. We find among these persons of rank a religion of some vitality—no court-fashion merely. It was to the *Introduction à la Vie Dévote* (1608) of St. Francis de Sales that Romanism was indebted for such hold as it really had on the upper classes. None of the great ecclesiastical writers of France—not even that darling of the fifteenth century, the *Imitatio Christi*, could win the ears of people of the world. In the *Introduction*, however, religion appeared neither ruthlessly stern, nor hopelessly fantastical. It was not, on the one side, scowling, unkempt, sordid, morose; it was not, on the other, impalpable, supersensuous, utterly unintelligible, as well as undesirable, to worldly common sense. Fashion and devotion met; piety and politeness embraced each other. The *Introduction* leaves to others the pains and raptures of the mystic. It is written for the Marthas, not the Marys. Its readers, personified in Philothea, are not supposed to be covetous of any extraordinary gifts. De Sales possessed a lively fancy, and the tender religious sentiment of his book, graced and lightened by its rainbow illustrations, was a bright-winged Psyche, welcome everywhere. These illustrations are drawn, sometimes from the farms, the flower-valleys, and the snow-peaks of his native Savoy; sometimes from fabulous natural history, from classic story, from the legends of the Church, or the forms and usages of the world,—oftenest of all, from the ways of infants and children, and from the love of mothers. St. Beuve happily characterises the work, as 'un livre qui, sur la table d'une femme comme il faut ou d'un gentilhomme poli de ce temps-là, ne chassait pas absolument le volume de

Montaigne, et, attendait, sans le fuir, le volume d'Urfé.' — *Causeries du Lundi*, tom. vii. p. 216.

⁷ This Harlay had owed his archbishopric to his libertinism in the days of Madame de Montespan. His sun was now setting, ingloriously enough, under the decent régime of the Maintenon, and there was nothing for it but to atone for the scandals of his life and diocese by exemplary rigour in matters of doctrine. The letters sent, and the documents shown him, were the fabrication of La Mothe and his creature the scrivener Gautier. They forged a letter from Marseilles, pretending that La Combe had slept in the same chamber with Madame Guyon—and also eaten meat in Lent. La Combe was further accused of having embraced and taught the heresy of Molinos.

The real letters which followed Madame Guyon from the scenes of her former activity breathe no suspicion of her character or motives. The Bishop of Geneva, in a letter quoted by Fénelon, declared that his only complaint against her was the indiscreet zeal with which she everywhere propagated truths which she believed serviceable to the Church. With that exception, 'he esteemed her infinitely, and entertained for her the highest imaginable regard.' This was in 1683. In 1688 he prohibited her books. But even in 1695, the same bishop repeats his praise of her piety and morals, and declares that his conscience never would have suffered him to speak of her in other than respectful language. —See *Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon* (London, 1757), vol. III. bk. xi. c. 2. *Autobiography*, part III. chapp. i. ii. iii. Fénelon's *Réponse à la Relation sur le Quietisme*, chap. i.

calumny and a forged letter obtained from the king a *lettre de cachet* confining Madame Guyon to an apartment in the Convent of St. Marie. The sisters were strongly prejudiced against her, but her gentle patience won all hearts, and her fair jailors soon vied with each other in praises of their fascinating prisoner. An examination elicited nothing decidedly unfavourable. Not a stain could be detected in her character ; she offered to submit all her papers and her writings to investigation. The intercession of Madame Miramion and other friends with Madame de Maintenon, procured her release, after a captivity of eight months.

The most dangerous enemy Madame Guyon had as yet was her own half-brother, Père La Mothe. He had calumniated her in secret while in Switzerland ; he was still more active now she was in Paris. He wished to become her Director, but La Combe was in the way. The artifices of La Mothe procured his arrest. He advised Madame Guyon, with hypocritical protestations of friendship, to flee to Montargis from the scandalous reports he himself had circulated, and from adversaries he himself had raised up. Then she would have been at his mercy—he would have pointed to her flight as a proof of guilt, and her own property and the guardianship of her children might have been secured for himself. He injured her as a relation only could. People said her cause must be a bad one, since her own brother was constrained, from regard to the credit of religion, to bear witness against her. A woman who had committed sacrilege at Lyons, and had run away from the Convent of Penitents at Dijon, was employed by him to forge letters which should damage the character of Madame Guyon ; to personate one of her maids, and to go from confessor to confessor throughout Paris, asserting that after living sixteen or seventeen years with her mistress, she had quitted her at last, in disgust at her abominable life.

III.

Released from the Convent of St. Marie, Madame Guyon was conducted by her court friends to express her thanks to Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr. This institution had been founded, ten years previously, for the education of the daughters of noble but impoverished families. The idea originated with Madame de Maintenon: it was executed with royal speed and magnificence by Louis, and St. Cyr became her favourite resort. In fifteen months two thousand six hundred workmen raised the structure, on a marshy soil, about half a league from Paris. The genius of Mansard presided over the architecture. The style of the ordinances was revised by Boileau and Racine. There three hundred young ladies of rank, dressed in gowns of brown crape, with white quilted caps, tied with ribbons whose colour indicated the class to which they belonged in the school, studied geography and drawing, heard mass, sang in the choir, and listened to preachments from the lips of Madame Brinon—who discoursed, so swore some of the courtiers, as eloquently as Bourdaloue himself. Tired out with the formal splendours of Versailles, Madame de Maintenon was never so happy as when playing the part of lady abbess at St. Cyr. Often she would be there by six in the morning, would herself assist at the toilette of the pupils, would take a class throughout the day, would give the novices lessons on spiritual experience; nothing in its routine was dull, nothing in its kitchen was mean. She hated Fontainebleau, for it tore her from her family at St. Cyr. For the private theatricals of St. Cyr, Racine wrote *Esther*, at the request of Madame de Maintenon. Happy was the courtier who could obtain permission to witness one of these representations, who could tell with triumph to envious groups of the excluded, what an admirable Ahasuerus Madame de Caylus made, what a spirited Mordecai was Mademoiselle de Glapion, how the graceful Mademoiselle de Veillenne

charmed the audience in the prayer of Esther—in short, how far the Esther surpassed the Phedra; and the actresses excelled the Raisins and the Chammelés of the Parisian boards. Louis himself drew up the list of admissions, as though it were for a journey to Marly—he was the first to enter—and stood at the door, with the catalogue of names in one hand and his cane held across as a barrier in the other, till all the privileged had entered.⁸ But the fashion of asceticism which grew with every year of Maintenon's reign threw its gloom over St. Cyr. The absolute vows were introduced, and much of the monotonous austerity of conventual life. Religious excitement was the only resource left to the inmates if they would not die of ennui. This relief was brought them by Madame Guyon.

Madame de Maintenon was touched with pity for the misfortunes of Madame Guyon, with admiration for such patience, such forgetfulness of self,—she found in the freshness and fervour of her religious conversation, a charm which recalled the warmer feelings of youth; which was welcome, for its elevation, after the fatigue and anxiety of state, for its sweetness, as contrasted with the barren minutiae of rigid formalism. She invited her constantly to her table—she encouraged her visits to St. Cyr—she met with her, and with Fénelon, at the Hôtels de Chevreuse and Beauvilliers, where a religious coterie assembled three times a week to discuss the mysteries of inward experience. Thus, during three or four years of favour with Madame de Maintenon, Madame Guyon became in effect the spiritual instructress of St. Cyr, and found herself at Paris surrounded by disciples whose numbers daily increased, and whom she withdrew from the licentious gaieties of the capital. At St. Cyr the young ladies studied her books, and listened to her as an oracle—the thoughtless grew serious—the religious

⁸ *Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon*, bk. ix. Madame Guyon's

doctrine entered St. Cyr while the absolute vows were yet under discussion.

strained every faculty to imitate the attainments of one in whom they saw the ideal of devotion. In Paris, mystical terminology became the fashionable language—it was caught up and glibly uttered by wits and roués—it melted from the lips of beauties who shot languishing glances at their admirers, while they affected to be weary of the world, and who coquetted while they talked significantly of holy indifference or pure love. Libertines, like Treville, professed reform, and wrote about mysticism,—atheists turned Christians, like Corbinelli, now became Quietists, and might be seen in the salon of Madame le Maigre, where Corbinelli shone, the brilliant expositor of the new religious romanticism.⁹

IV.

During this period, Madame Guyon became acquainted with Fénélon. At their first interview she was all admiration, he all distrust. ‘Her mind,’ she says, ‘had been taken up with him with much force and sweetness;’ it seemed to be revealed to her that he should become one of her spiritual children. Fénélon, on his part, thought she had neglected her duty to her family for an imaginary mission. But he had inquired concerning her life at Montargis, and heard only praise. After a few conversations his doubts vanished : he had proposed objections, requested explanations, pointed out unguarded expressions in her books—she was modest, submissive, irresistible.¹⁰

⁹ *Memoirs for the History of Madame de Maintenon*, bk. xi. chap. v.

¹⁰ *Autobiography*, part III. chap. ix. Fénélon declares that her explanations at these interviews were such as to satisfy him of the harmlessness and orthodoxy of her intention. She appeared to him often extravagant or questionable in expression, from her ignorance; but so favoured of God, that the most learned divine might gather spiritual wisdom from her lips. She told him of certain instantaneous superna-

tural communications, which came and vanished, she knew not how. Yet, like John of the Cross, she did not rest on these, but passed on into the obscure path of pure faith. For this he praised her, and believed that though these experiences were illusory, a spirit so lowly and so obedient had been faithful to grace throughout, such involuntary deception notwithstanding. —*Réponse à la Relation sur le Quietisme*, chap. i. 10-13.

There was a power in her language, her manner, her surviving beauty, which mysteriously dissipated prejudice ; which even Nicole, Bossuet, Boileau, Gaillard, could not withstand when they conversed with her,—which was only overcome when they had ceased to behold her face, when her persuasive accents sounded no longer in their ears. She recalled to the thoughts of Fénélon his youthful studies at St. Sulpice ;—there he had perused the mystical divines in dusty tomes, clasped and brazen-cornered,—now he beheld their buried doctrine raised to life in the busy present, animating the untaught eloquence of a woman, whom a noble enthusiasm alone had endowed with all the prerogatives of genius, and all the charms of beauty. This friendship, which events rendered afterwards so disastrous for himself, was beneficial to Madame Guyon. Fénélon taught her to moderate some of her spiritual excesses. Her extravagance reached its culminating point at Thonon. At Paris, influenced doubtless by Fénélon, as well as by more frequent intercourse with the world, she no longer enjoys so many picturesque dreams, no more heals the sick and casts out devils with a word, and no longer—as in her solitude there—suffers inward anguish consequent on the particular religious condition of Father La Combe when he is three hundred miles off.¹¹ It is curious to observe how the acquaintance of Fénélon with Madame Guyon began with suspicion and ripened into friendship, while that of Bossuet, commencing with approval, and even admiration, ended in calumny and persecution. Bossuet declared to the Duc de

¹¹ She still speaks, however, of the 'sense' vouchsafed her of the state of the souls given to her, even when they were at a distance ; and of communication in God with those to whom the Lord united her by the tie of spiritual maternity. *Autobiography*, part III. ch. viii. Nothing was more likely to open her eyes to the questionable character of some of her experiences, and to the unguarded nature of many of her ex-

pressions, than the kindly yet searching inquiries of a man like Fénélon, qualified by temperament to enter into her feelings, and a master in mystical theology. Mr. Upham seems to me greatly to overrate the influence of Madame Guyon on Fénélon. To her fancy, her imagination might at times depict him as a spiritual son : he was, in fact, a friendly judge.

Chevreuse that while examining her writings, for the first time, he was astonished by a light and unction he had never before seen, and, for three days, was made to realize the divine Presence in a manner altogether new. Bossuet had never, like Fénelon, studied the mystics.¹²

v.

The two most influential Directors at St. Cyr were Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, and Fénelon. These two men form a striking contrast. Godet was disgusting in person and in manners—a sour ascetic—a spiritual martinet—devoted to all the petty austerities of the most formal discipline. Fénelon was dignified and gentle, graceful as a courtier, and spotless as a saint—the most pure, the most persuasive, the most accomplished of religious guides. No wonder that most of the young inmates of St. Cyr adored Fénelon, and could not endure Godet. Madame de Maintenon wavered between her two confessors ; if Fénelon was the more agreeable, Godet seemed the more safe. Godet was miserably jealous of his rival. He was not sorry to find that the new doctrines had produced a little insubordination within the quiet walls of St. Cyr—that Fénelon would be compromised by the indiscretion of some among his youthful admirers. He brought a lamentable tale to Madame de Maintenon. Madame du Peron, the mistress of the novices, had complained that her pupils obeyed her no longer. They neglected regular duties for unseasonable prayers. They had illuminations and ecstasies. One in the midst of sweeping her room would stand, leaning on her broom, lost in contemplation : another,

¹² When called to separate the true mysticism from the false in the writings of Madame Guyon, Bossuet was not only ignorant of Tauler, Ruysbroek, Harphius, and others ; he had not even read Francis de Sales or John of the Cross. Fénelon, at his request, sent him a collection of passages from Suso, Harphius, Ruysbroek, Tauler,

Catharine of Genoa, St. Theresa, John of the Cross, Alvarez, De Sales, and Madame de Chantal. With just indignation does Fénelon expose the artifice by which Bossuet afterwards attempted to turn this confidence against him.—*Réponse à la Relation sur le Quietisme*, chap. ii. 18-27.

instead of hearing lessons, became inspired, and resigned herself to the operation of the Spirit. The under-mistress of the classes stole away the enlightened from the rest, and they were found in remote corners of the house, feasting in secret on the sweet poison of Madame Guyon's doctrine. The precise and methodical Madame de Maintenon was horrified. She had hoped to realize in her institute the ideal of her Church, a perfect uniformity of opinion, an unerring mechanism of obedience. We wished, said she, to promote intelligence, we have made orators ; devotion, we have made Quietists ; modesty, we have made prudes ; elevation of sentiment, and we have pride. She commissioned Godet to reclaim the wanderers, to demand that the books of Madame Guyon should be surrendered, setting herself the example by publicly delivering into his hand her own copy of the *Short Method*. She requested Madame Guyon to refrain from visiting St. Cyr. She began to doubt the prudence or the orthodoxy of Fénelon.¹³ What would the king say, if he heard of it—he, who had never liked Fénelon—who hated nothing so much as heresy—who had but the other day extinguished the Quietism of Molinos ? She had read to him some of Madame Guyon's exposition of the Canticles ; and he called it dreamy stuff. Doctrines really dangerous to purity were insinuated by some designing monks, under the name of Quietism. The odium fell on the innocent Madame Guyon ; and her friends would necessarily share it. Malicious voices charged her with corrupting the principles of the Parisian ladies. Madame Guyon replied with justice,—‘ When they were patching, and painting, and ruining their families by gambling and by dress, not a word was said against it ; now that they have withdrawn from such vanities, the cry is, that I have ruined them.’ Rumour grew more loud and scandalous every day : the most incredible

¹³ *History of Madame de Maintenon*, bk. XI. chap. vii.

reports were most credited. The schools, too, had taken up the question of mysticism, and argued it with heat. Nicole and Lami had dissolved an ancient friendship to quarrel about it,—as Fénelon and Bossuet were soon to do. No controversy threatened to involve so many interests, to fan so many passions, to kindle so many hatreds, as this variance about disinterestedness, about indifference, about love.

The politic Madame de Maintenon watched the gathering storm, and became all caution. At all costs, she must free herself from the faintest suspicion of fellowship with heresy. She questioned, on the opinions of Madame Guyon, Bossuet and Noailles, Bourdaloue, Joly, Tiberge, Brisacier, and Tronson; and the replies of these esteemed divines, uniformly unfavourable, decided her. It would be necessary to disown Madame Guyon: her condemnation would become inevitable. Fénelon must be induced to disown her too, or his career was at a close; and Madame de Maintenon could smile on him no longer.¹⁴

Madame Guyon, alarmed by the growing numbers and vehemence of her adversaries, had recourse to the man who afterwards became her bitterest enemy. She proposed to Bossuet that he should examine her writings. He complied; held several private interviews with her, and expressed himself, on the whole, more favourably than could have been expected. But these conferences, which did not altogether satisfy Bossuet, could do nothing to allay the excitement of the public.¹⁵

¹⁴ *History of Madame de Maintenon*, bk. XI. chap. vii. Bausset, *Histoire de Fénelon*, liv. ii. p. 295. The high opinion entertained of Fénelon by Madame de Maintenon was, as yet, unshaken. She knew that though the friend of Madame Guyon, he was not her advocate. But she was called to side with the man of charity or the man of zeal—the liberal man or the bigot; and the issue could not long be doubtful. Fénelon early saw the signs of danger.

We find him striving to moderate the enthusiasm of Madame de la Maisonfort—to reconcile her to the regulations of Godet—to repress her indiscreet zeal in behalf of her cousin, Madame Guyon.—*Correspondance de Fénelon*, Lettres 24, 26, 29, 30.

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, part III. chap. xiii. Phelipeaux gives in full the correspondence on both sides, *Relation de l'Origine, du Progrès et de la Condamnation du Quietisme répandu en France* (1732),

VI.

Madame Guyon now requested the appointment of commissioners, who should investigate, and pronounce finally concerning her life and doctrine.¹⁶ Three were chosen—Bossuet; Noailles, Bishop of Chalons; and Tronson, Superior of St. Sulpice. Noailles was a sensible, kind-hearted man; Tronson, a worthy creature, in poor health, with little opinion of his own; Bossuet, the accredited champion of the Gallican Church, accustomed to move in an atmosphere of flattery—the august dictator of the ecclesiastical world—was absolute in their conferences. They met, from time to time, during some six months, at the little village of Issy, the country residence of the Superior of St. Sulpice. When Madame Guyon appeared before them, Bossuet alone was harsh and rude; he put the worst construction on her words; he interrupted her; now he silenced her replies, now he burlesqued them; now he affected to be unable to comprehend them; now he held up his hands in contemptuous amazement at her ignorance; he would not suffer to be read the justification which had cost her so much pains; he sent away her friend, the Duke of Chevreuse. This ominous severity

liv. i. pp. 73, &c. His account abounds in misrepresentations, and does little more, in the first part, than echo the *Relation sur le Quiétisme* of Bossuet, to whom the abbé was devoted. But his minuteness of detail, and the copious insertion of important letters and documents on either side, give to the heavy narrative considerable value. In a subsequent interview between Bossuet and Madame Guyon, she declared herself unable to pray for any particular thing—the forgiveness of her sins, for instance. To do so was to fail in absolute abandonment and disinterestedness. Bossuet was shocked. Madame Guyon promised and meant, to be all submission; but conscience would be unmanageable at times. Bos-

suet writes her long, sensible, hard-headed letters, in which, without much difficulty, he exposes her error, and leaves her no ground to stand on. She, however, must still humbly suggest that the exercise of love embraces all petitions, and that as there is a love without reflexion, so there may be a prayer without reflexion—a substantial prayer, comprehending all others. —*Phelipeaux*, p. 111.

¹⁶ Her request was made to Madame de Maintenon for commissioners, half clerical, half lay, to examine into the scandals which had been set afloat against her character.—*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 114. *Autobiography*, part III. chap. xv.

confused and frightened her.¹⁷ She readily consented to retire to a convent in the town of Meaux, there to be under the surveillance of Bossuet. She undertook this journey in the depth of the most frightful winter which had been known for many years; the coach was buried in the snow, and she narrowly escaped with life. The commissioners remained to draw up, by the fireside, certain propositions, which should determine what was, and what was not, true mysticism. These constitute the celebrated Articles of Issy.

Bossuet repeatedly visited Madame Guyon at Meaux. The great man did not disdain to approach the sick-bed of his victim, as she lay in the last stage of exhaustion, and there endeavour to overreach and terrify her. He demanded a submission, and promised a favourable certificate. The submission he received, the certificate he withheld. He sought to force her, by threats, to sign that she did not believe in the Incarnation. The more timid she appeared, the more boisterous and imperative his tone. One day, he would come with words of kindness, on another, with words of fury; yet, at the very time, this Pilate could say to some of his brethren, that he found no serious fault in her. He declared, on one occasion, that he was actuated by no dislike—he was urged to rigorous measures by others; on another, that the submission of Madame Guyon, and the suppression of Quietism, effected by his skill and energy, would be as good as an archbishopric or

¹⁷ *Autobiography*, chapp. xvi. xvii. See also her letter to the three commissioners, in *Phelipeaux*, p. 117. Harlay heard with indignation of this Conference at Issy, to decide upon a heresy which had been unearthed in his diocese. He endeavoured to rouse the suspicions of Louis, but in vain. He determined himself to condemn the writings of Madame Guyon, before the Commissioners could come to a decision. Madame de Maintenon informed Bos-

suet, who paid a visit without loss of time to his metropolitan, complimented him on the censure he was about to fulminate, gave every explanation, and took his departure with polite assurances that the verdict of Issy would but reiterate the condemnation pronounced by the vigilant Archbishop of Paris. So completely was the cause of Madame Guyon prejudged.—*Phelipeaux*, p. 125.

a cardinal's hat to him. Justice and ambition contended within him ; for a little while the battle wavered, till presently pride and jealousy brought up to the standard of the latter, reinforcements so overwhelming, that justice was beaten for ever from the field. After six months' residence at Meaux, Madame Guyon received from Bossuet a certificate attesting her filial submissiveness to the Catholic faith, his satisfaction with her conduct, authorizing her still to participate in the sacrament of the Church, and acquitting her of all implication in the heresy of Molinos.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Fénelon had been added to the number of the commissioners at Issy. He and Bossuet were still on intimate terms ; but Bossuet, like all vain men, was a dangerous friend. He knew how to inspire confidence which he did not scruple to betray. Madame Guyon, conscious of the purity of her life, of the orthodoxy of her intention, persuaded that such a man must be superior to the meaner motives of her persecutors, had placed in the hands of Bossuet her most private papers, not excluding the *Autobiography*, which had not been submitted even to the eye of Fénelon. To Bossuet, Fénelon had, in letters, unfolded his most secret thoughts—the conflicts and aspirations of his spiritual history, so unbounded was his reliance on his honour, so exalted his estimate of the judgment of that powerful mind in matters of religion. The disclosures of both were distorted and abused to crush them ; both had to rue the day when they trusted one who could sacrifice truth to glory. At Issy, the deference and the candour of Fénelon were met by a haughty reserve on the part of Bossuet. The meekness of Fénelon and the timidity of Madame Guyon only inflamed his arrogance ; to bow to him was to be overborne ; to confront him was at once to secure

¹⁸ *Autobiography*, part III. chapp. xviii. xix. *Réponse à la Relation*, &c., I. ii. 3. *Upham*, vol. II. chapp. x. and xi.

respect, if not fairness. The Articles were already drawn up when the signature of Fénelon was requested. He felt that he should have been allowed his fair share in their construction; as they were, he could not sign them; he proposed modifications; they were acceded to; and the thirty-four Articles of Issy appeared in March, 1695, with the name of Fénelon associated with the other three.¹⁹

VII.

To any one who reads these Articles, and the letter written by Fénelon to Madame de la Maisonfort, after signing them, it will be obvious that the Quietism of Fénelon went within a moderate compass. When he comes to explain his meaning, the controversy is very much a dispute about words. He did not, like Madame Guyon, profess to conduct devout minds by a certain method to the attainment of perfect disinterestedness. He only maintained the possibility of realizing a love to God, thus purified from self. He was as fully aware as his opponents, that to evince our love to God by willingness to endure perdition, was the same thing as attesting our devotion to Him by our readiness to hate Him for ever. This is the standing objection against the doctrine of disinterested

¹⁹ The articles at first proposed to Fénelon for his signature were thirty in number. The 12th and 13th, the 33rd and 34th, were wanting. He said that he could only sign these thirty articles *as they were*, '*par déférence*,' and against his persuasion. Two days afterwards, when the four additional articles were laid before him, he declared himself ready to sign them with his blood. The 34th article is the most important of the four, as bearing directly on the most critical question arising from the doctrine of disinterested love. It allows that doctrine expressly, if words have meaning, and

occupies all the ground Fénelon himself was concerned to maintain in its defence. (*Entretiens sur la Religion*, Fén. Œuvres, tom. i. p. 34.) The article is in substance as follows:—On peut inspirer aux âmes peignées et vraiment humbles un consentement à la volonté de Dieu, quand même, par une supposition très-fausse, au lieu des biens éternels promis aux justes, il les tiendrait dans les tourments éternels, sans néanmoins les priver de sa grâce et de son amour.—*Réponse à la Relation*, &c., chap. iii. *Phéliepeaux*, liv. i. pp. 131, 135-137.

love. The great Nonconformist divine, John Howe, urges it with force. It is embodied in the thirty-second of the Articles in question. But it does not touch Fénelon's position. His assertion is, that we should will our own salvation only because God wills it ; that, supposing it possible for us to endure hell torments, retaining the grace of God and our consciousness that such suffering was according to His will, and conducive to His glory, the soul, animated by pure love, would embrace even such a doom.²⁰ It is but the supposition of an impossible case,—a supposition, moreover, which involves a very gross and external conception of hell. It could find no place in a mysticism like that of Behmen or Swedenborg, where hell is regarded, much more truly, less as an infliction from without, than as the development of dominant evil from within. The Quietism of Fénelon does not preclude the reflex actions of the mind, or confine the spirit of the adept to the sphere of the immediate. It forbids only the introspection of self-complacency.²¹ It does not merge distinct acts in a continuous operation, nor discourage effort for self-advancement in holiness, or for the benefit of others—it only teaches us to moderate that impatience which has its origin in self, and declares that our own co-operation becomes, in certain cases, unconscious—is, as it were, lost in a 'special facility.'²² The indefatigable benevolence of his life abundantly repudiates the slanderous conclusion of his adversaries, that the doctrine of indifference concerning the future, involves indifference likewise to moral good and evil in the present. Bossuet himself is often as mystical as Fénelon, sometimes more so.²³ St.

²⁰ See Note on p. 278.

²¹ See second Note on p. 278.

²² See Note on p. 279.

²³ Witness the panegyrics of Bossuet on Theresa and John of the Cross. Compare also their different verdicts on the former. Fénelon says, writing

to Madame Maintenon, 'Quelque respect et quelque admiration que j'aie pour Sainte Thérèse, je n'aurais jamais voulu donner au public tout ce qu'elle a écrit.'—*Correspondance*, 31. Bossuet, writing to Madame Guyon, says, 'Je n'ai jamais hésité un seul moment sur

Francis de Sales and Madame de Chantal said the very same things,—not to mention the unbridled utterances of the earlier and the mediæval mystics canonized by the Church of Rome. Could the controversy have been confined to the real question, no harm would have been done. It would have resembled the duel, in Ben Jonson's play, between Fastidious Brisk and Signor Puntarvolo, where the rapiers cut through taffeta and lace, gold embroidery and satin doublets, but nowhere enter the skin. Certain terms and certain syllogisms, a well-starched theory, or an argument trimmed with the pearls of eloquence—might have been transfixed or rent by a dexterous pen, on this side or on that, but the prize of the conqueror would not have been court favour, nor the penalty of the conquered, exile. Theologians might have written, for a few, the learned history of a logical campaign, but the eyes of Europe would never have been turned to a conflict for fame and fortune raging in the Vatican and at Versailles, enlisting every religious party throughout Roman-catholic Christendom, and involving the rise or fall of some of the most illustrious names among the churchmen and nobility of France.

VIII.

The writings of Madame Guyon had now been condemned, though without mention of her name; Bossuet had intimated that he required nothing further from her; she began to hope that the worst might be over, and returned with her friends from Meaux to Paris, to live there as much retired as possible. This flight, which he chose to call dishonourable, irritated Bossuet. She had suffered him to see that she could trust him no

les états de Sainte Thérèse, parceque le n'y ai rien trouvé, que je ne trouvasse aussidans l'Ecriture,' &c.—*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 104. In the *Instructions sur les Etats d'Oraison*, Bossuet, in speaking of the passive state, had allowed of

certain miraculous suspensions (impuissances) from which Fénelon shrinks—which he would have located in some section *Faux* of his *Maxims*—and to which Noailles refused his approval.—*Réponse à la Relation*, xxviii. and lxii.

longer. He endeavoured to recover the certificate he had given. An order was procured for her arrest. The police observed that a house in the Faubourg St. Antoine was always entered by a pass-key. They made their way in, and found Madame Guyon. They brought away their prisoner, ill as she was, and the king was induced, with much difficulty, to sign an order for her incarceration at Vincennes. The despot thought a convent might suffice,—not so the persecutors.²⁴

Bossuet had been for some time occupied in writing a work which should demolish with a blow the doctrine of Madame Guyon, and hold her up to general odium. It consisted of ten books, and was entitled *Instructions on the States of Prayer*. He showed the manuscript to Fénelon, desiring him to append a statement, approving all it contained, which should accompany the volume when published. Fénelon refused. Six months ago he had declared that he could be no party to a personal attack on Madame Guyon: the *Instructions* contained little else. That tremendous attack was no mere exposure of unguarded expressions—no mere deduction of dangerous consequences, possibly unforeseen by a half-educated writer; it charged Madame Guyon with having for her sole design the inculcation of a false spirituality, which abandoned, as an imperfection, faith in the divine Persons and the humanity of Christ; which disowned the authority of Scripture, of tradition, of morality; which dispensed with vocal prayer and acts of worship; which established an impious and brutal

²⁴ Her letter to Bossuet furnishes a fair justification of this retreat to Paris. —*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. p. 152. It gratifies our curiosity to learn from this authority what books were seized when Desgrès, the detective, entered the little house in the Faubourg St. Antoine, in the name of the king. There were some plays of Molière, some romances, such as *John of Paris* and *Richard*

Lion-heart, but these, said Madame Guyon, belonged to the lacqueys of her son, a lieutenant in the guards. But she acknowledged a *Griseldis* and *Don Quixote* as her books. It is pleasing to find our fair saint, so far of like passions with ourselves, amused with Sancho, and pitying Griseldis,—herself a patient sufferer at the hands of blinded, pitiless men.

indifference between vice and virtue, between everlasting hate of God and everlasting love; which forbade resistance to temptation as an interruption to repose; which taught an imaginary perfection extinguishing the nobler desires only to inflame the lower, and clothing the waywardness of self-will and passion with the authority of inspiration and of prophecy. Fénelon knew that this accusation was one mass of falsehood. If Bossuet himself believed it, why had he suffered such a monster still to commune; why had he been so faithless to his high office in the Church, as to give his testimonials declaring the purity of her purpose and the soundness of her faith, when he had not secured the formal retraction of a single error? To sign his approval of that book, would be not merely a cowardly condemnation of a woman whom he knew to be innocent—it would be the condemnation of himself. His acquaintance with Madame Guyon was matter of notoriety. It would be to say that he—a student of theology, a priest, an archbishop, the preceptor of princes—had not only refrained from denouncing, but had honoured with his friendship, the teacher of an abominable spiritualism which abolished the first principles of right and wrong. It would be to declare, in fact, such a prelate far more guilty than such a heretic. And Bossuet pretended to be his friend—Bossuet, who had laid the snare which might have been the triumph of the most malignant enemy. It was not a mere question of persons—Madame Guyon might die in prison—he himself might be defamed and disgraced—he did not mean to become her champion—surely that was enough, knowing what he knew,—let her enemies be satisfied with his silence—he could not suffer another man to take his pen out of his hand to denounce as an emissary of Satan one whom he believed to be a child of God.²⁵

²⁵ See Note on p. 280.

Such was Fénelon's position. He wished to be silent concerning Madame Guyon. To assent to the charges brought against her would not have been even a serviceable lie, if such a man could have desired to escape the wrath of Bossuet at so scandalous a price. Every one would have said that the Archbishop of Cambray had denounced his accomplice out of fear. Neither was he prepared to embrace the opposite extreme and to defend the personal cause of the accused, many of whose expressions he thought questionable, orthodox as might be her explanation, and many of whose extravagances he disapproved. His enemies wished to force him to speak, and were prepared to damage his reputation whether he appeared for or against the prisoner at Vincennes. At length it became necessary that he should break silence ; and when he did, it was not to pronounce judgment concerning the oppressed or her oppressors, it was to investigate the abstract question,—the teaching of the Church on the doctrine of pure love. He wrote the *Maxims of the Saints*.

IX.

This celebrated book appeared in January, 1697, while Fénelon was at Cambray, amazing the Flemings of his diocese by affording them, in their new archbishop, the spectacle of a church dignitary who really cared for his flock, who consigned the easier duties to his vicars, and reserved the hardest for himself ; who entered their cottages like a father, listened with interest to the story of their hardships or their griefs ; who consoled, counselled, and relieved them ; who partook of their black bread as though he had never shared the banquets of Versailles, and as though Paris were to him, as to themselves, a wonderful place far away, whose streets were paved with gold. Madame Guyon was in confinement at the village of Vaugirard, whither the compassion of Noailles had transferred her from Vincennes, resigned and peaceful, writing poetry and

singing hymns with her pious servant-girl, the faithful companion of her misfortunes. Bossuet was visiting St. Cyr—very busy in endeavouring to purify the theology of the young ladies from all taint of Quietism—but quite unsuccessful in reconciling Madame de la Maisonfort to the loss of her beloved Fénélon.

The *Maxims of the Saints* was an exposition and vindication of the doctrines of pure love, of mystical union, and of perfection, as handed down by some of the most illustrious and authoritative names in the Roman-catholic Church, from Dionysius, Clement, and Augustine, to John of the Cross and Francis de Sales ;—it explained their terminology ;—it placed in juxtaposition with every article of legitimate mysticism its false correlative—the use and the abuse ;—and was, in fact, though not expressly, a complete justification (on the principles of his Church) of that moderate Quietism held by himself, and in substance by Madame Guyon.²⁶ The book was approved by Tronson, by Fleury, by Hébert, by Pirot, a doctor of the Sorbonne, by Père la Chaise, the King's Confessor, by the Jesuits of Clermont,—but it was denounced by Bossuet ; it was nicknamed the Bible of the Little Church ; Pontchartrain, the comptroller-general, and Maurice Le Tellier, Archbishop of Rheims, told the King that it was fit only for knaves or fools. Louis sent for Bossuet. The Bishop of Meaux cast himself theatrically at the feet of majesty, and, with pretended tears, implored forgiveness for not earlier revealing the heresy of his unhappy brother. A compromise was yet possible ; for Fénélon was ready to explain his explanations, and to suppress whatever might be pronounced dangerous in his pages. But the eagle of Meaux had seen the meek and dove-like Fénélon—once almost more his disciple than his friend—erect the standard of independence, and assume the port of a rival. His pride was

²⁶ See second Note on p. 280.

roused. He was resolved to reign alone on the ecclesiastical Olympus of the Court, and he would not hear of a peace that might rob him of a triumph. Did Fénélon pretend to shelter himself by great names,—he, Bossuet, would intrench himself within the awful sanctuary of the Church; he represented religion in France; he would resent every attack upon his own opinions as an assault on the Catholic faith; he had the ear of the King, with whom heresy and treason were identical; success was all but assured, and, if so, war was glory. Such tactics are not peculiar to the seventeenth century. In our own day, every one implicated in religious abuses identifies himself with religion,—brands every exposure of his misconduct as hostility to the cause of God,—invests his miserable personality with the benign grandeur of the Gospel,—and stigmatizes as troublers in Israel all who dare to inquire into his procedure,—while innumerable dupes or cowards sleepily believe, or cautiously pretend to do so, that those who have management in a good object must themselves be good.

x.

Fénélon now requested the royal permission to appeal to Rome; he obtained it, but was forbidden to repair thither to plead in person the cause of his book, and ordered to quit the Court and confine himself to his diocese. The King went to St. Cyr, and expelled thence three young ladies, for an offence he could not in reality comprehend,—the sin of Quietism.²⁷ Intrigue was active, and the Duke de Beauvilliers was nearly losing his place in the royal household because of his attachment to Fénélon. The Duke—noble in spirit as in name, and worthy of such a friendship,—boldly told *Le Grande Monarque* that he was ready to leave the palace rather than to forsake his friend. Six days before the banishment of Fénélon, Louis had

²⁷ Baussett, *Histoire de Fénélon*, liv. iii. p. 45. See also Note on p. 281.

sent to Innocent XII. a letter, drawn up by Bossuet, saying in effect that the *Maxims* had been condemned at Paris, that everything urged in its defence was futile, and that the royal authority would be exerted to the utmost to execute the decision of the pontifical chair. Bossuet naturally calculated that a missive, thus intimating the sentence Infallibility was expected by a great monarch to pronounce,—arriving almost at the same time with the news of a disgrace reserved only for the most grave offences,—would secure the speedy condemnation of Fénélon's book.

At Rome commenced a series of deliberations destined to extend over a space of nearly two years. Two successive bodies of adjudicators were impanelled and dissolved, unable to arrive at a decision. A new congregation of cardinals was selected, who held scores of long and wearisome debates, while rumour and intrigue alternately heightened or depressed the hopes of either party.²⁸ To write the *Maxims of the Saints* was a delicate task. It was not easy to repudiate the mysticism of Molinos without impugning the mysticism of St. Theresa. But the position of these judges was more delicate yet. It was still less easy to censure Fénélon without rendering suspicious, at the least, the orthodoxy of the most shining saints in the Calendar. On the one hand, there might be risk of a schism; on the other pressed the urgency and the influence of a powerful party, the impatience, almost the menaces of a great king.

The real question was simply this,—Is disinterested love possible? Can man love God for His own sake alone, with a love, not excluding, but subordinating all other persons and objects, so that they shall be regarded only in God who is

²⁸ Bausset, *Hist. de Fénélon*, liv. iii. 47. A minute, though very partial account of all the squabbles and intrigues at Rome, from first to last, may be read

in *Phelipeaux*.—See also *Memoirs of Madame de Maintenon*, xi. 19. *Corr. de Fénélon*, lettre 108.

All in All? If so, is it dangerous to assert the possibility, to commend this divine ambition, as Fénelon has done? But the discussion was complicated and inflamed by daily slander and recrimination, by treachery and insinuation, and by the honest anger they provoke; by the schemes of personal ambition, by the rivalry of religious parties, by the political intrigues of the State, by the political intrigues of the Church; by the interests of a crew of subaltern agents, who loved to fish in muddy waters; and by the long cherished animosity between Gallican and Ultramontanist. Couriers pass and repass continually between Rome and Cambray, between Rome and Paris. The Abbé Bossuet writes constantly from Rome to the Bishop of Meaux; the Abbé de Chanterac from the same city to the Archbishop of Cambray. Chanterac writes like a faithful friend and a good man; he labours day and night in the cause of Fénelon; he bids him be of good cheer and put his trust in God. The letters of the Abbé Bossuet to his uncle are worthy a familiar of the Inquisition. After circulating calumnies against the character of Madame Guyon, after hinting that Fénelon was a partaker of her immoralities as well as of her heresy, and promising, with each coming post, to produce fresh confessions and new discoveries of the most revolting licentiousness, he sits down to urge Bossuet to second his efforts by procuring the banishment of every friend whom Fénelon yet has at Court; and to secure, by a decisive blow in Paris, the ruin of that 'wild beast,' Fénelon, at Rome. Bossuet lost no time in acting on the suggestion of so base an instrument.²⁹

XI.

At Paris a hot war of letters, pamphlets, and treatises, was maintained by the leaders, whose quarrel everywhere divided the city and the court into two hostile encampments. Fénelon

²⁹ Bausset, iii. 48-50; Aimé-Martin, *Études sur la Vie de Fénelon*, p. 14.

offered a resistance Bossuet had never anticipated, and the veteran polemic was deeply mortified to see public opinion doubtful, whether he or a younger rival had won the laurels in argument and eloquence. In an evil hour for his fame he resolved to crush his antagonist at all costs ; he determined that the laws of honourable warfare should be regarded no more, that no confidence should be any longer sacred. In the summer of 1698 the storm burst upon the head of the exile at Cambray. Early in June, Fénélon heard that the Abbé de Beaumont, his nephew, and the Abbé de Langeron, his friend, had been dismissed in disgrace from the office of sub-preceptors to the young Duke of Burgundy ; that Dupuy and De Leschelles, had been banished the Court because of their attachment to him ; that his brother had been expelled from the marine, and a son of Madame Guyon from the guards ; that the retiring and pacific Fleury had narrowly escaped ignominy for a similar cause : that the Dukes of Beauvilliers, Chevreuse, and Guiche, were themselves menaced, and the prospect of their downfall openly discussed ; and that to correspond with him was hereafter a crime against the State. Within a month, another Job's messenger brought him tidings that Bossuet had produced a book entitled *An Account of Quietism*—an attack so terrible that the dismay of his remaining friends had almost become despair. Bossuet possessed three formidable weapons—his influence as a courtier, his authority as a priest, his powers as an author. He wielded them all at once, and all of them dishonourably. If he was unfair in the first capacity, when he invoked the thunders of royalty to ruin the cause of a theological opponent—if he was unfair in the second, when he denounced forbearance and silenced intercession as sins against God,—he was yet more so in the third, when he employed all his gifts, to weave into a malignant tissue of falsehood and exaggeration the memoirs of Madame Guyon, the correspondence of Fénélon

with Madame de Maintenon, and his former confidential letters to himself—letters on spiritual matters to a spiritual guide—letters which should have been sacred as the secrecy of the Confessional. The sensation created by the *Account of Quietism* was prodigious. Bossuet presented his book to the King, whose approval was for every parasite the authentication of all its slanders. Madame de Maintenon, with her own hand, distributed copies among the courtiers; in the salon of Marly nothing else was talked of; in the beautiful gardens groups of lords and ladies, such as Watteau would have loved to paint, were gathered on the grass, beside the fountains, beneath the trees, to hear it read; it was begged, borrowed, stolen, greedily snatched, and delightedly devoured; its anecdotes were so piquant, its style so sparkling, its bursts of indignant eloquence so grand; gay ladies, young and old, dandies, wits, and libertines, found its scandal so delicious,—Madame Guyon was so exquisitely ridiculous,—La Combe, so odious a Tartuffe,—Fénélon, so pitiably displumed of all his shining virtues; and, what was best of all, the insinuations were worse than the charges,—the book gave much and promised more,—it hinted at disclosures more disgraceful yet, and gave free scope to every malicious invention and every prurient conjecture.³⁰

XII.

The generous Fénélon, more thoughtful for others than for himself, at first hesitated to reply even to such a provocation, lest he should injure the friends who yet remained to him at Versailles. But he was soon convinced that their position, as much as his, rendered an answer imperative. He received Bossuet's book on the 8th of July, and by the 13th of August his defence had been written, printed, and arrived at Rome, to gladden the heart of poor Chanterac, to stop the mouth of the enemy,

³⁰ Bausset, 53-4; *Mem. of Maintenon*, xi. 20; Amié-Martin, 15.

and to turn the tide once more in behalf of his failing party. This refutation, written with such rapidity, and under such disadvantages, was a masterpiece,—it redeemed his character from every calumny,—it raised his reputation to its height,—it would have decided a fair contest completely in his favour. It was composed when his spirit was oppressed by sorrow for the ruin of his friends, and darkened by the apprehension of new injuries which his justification might provoke,—by a proscribed man at Cambray, remote from the assistance and appliances most needful,—without a friend to guide or to relieve the labour of arranging and transcribing documents and of verifying dates, where scrupulous accuracy was of vital importance,—when it was difficult to procure correct intelligence from Paris, and hazardous to write thither lest he should compromise his correspondents,—when even his letters to Chanterac were not safe from inspection,—when it would be difficult to find a printer for such a book, and yet more so to secure its circulation in the metropolis. As it was, D'Argenson, the lieutenant of police,—a functionary portrayed by his contemporaries as at once the ugliest and most unprincipled of men,—seized a package of seven hundred copies at the gates of Paris. The *Reply* appeared, however, and was eagerly read. Even the few who were neutral, the many who were envious, the host who were prejudiced, could not withhold their admiration from that lucid and elegant style—that dignified and unaffected eloquence; numbers yielded, in secret, at least, to the force of such facts and such arguments; while all were astonished at the skill and self-command with which the author had justified his whole career without implicating a single friend; and leaving untouched the shield of every other adversary, had concentrated all his force on exposing the contradictions, the treachery, and the falsehood of Bossuet's accusation.³¹

³¹ Bausset, 59-61. The means to which Bossuet could stoop—the falsehoods he could coolly repeat, after detection, as though nothing had hap-

The controversy now draws to a close. Bossuet published *Remarks* on the *Reply* of Fénélon, and Fénélon rejoined with *Remarks* on the *Remarks* of Bossuet. Sixty loyal doctors of the Sorbonne censured twelve propositions, in the *Maxims*, while Rome was yet undecided. Towards the close of the same year (1698) Louis wrote a letter to the Pope, yet more indecently urgent than his former one, demanding a thorough condemnation of so dangerous a book; and this epistle he seconded by depriving Fénélon, a few weeks afterwards, of the title and pension of preceptor—that pension which Fénélon had once nobly offered to return to a treasury exhausted by ambitious wars.³²

Innocent XII. had heard, with indignant sorrow, of the arbitrary measures adopted against Fénélon and his friends. He was mortified by the arrogance of Louis, by the attempts so openly made to forestall his judgment. He was accustomed to say that Cambray had erred through excess of love to God; Meaux, by want of love to his neighbour. But Louis was evidently roused, and it was not safe to provoke him too far. After a last effort at a compromise, the Pope yielded; and the cardinals pronounced a condemnation, far less complete, however, than the vehemence of the accusers had hoped to secure. Twenty-three propositions extracted from the *Maxims*, were censured, but the Pontiff openly declared that such censure did not extend to the explanations which the Archbishop of Cambray had given of his book. This sentence

pened—the misquotation, and misrepresentation—the constant reply to awkwardly pressing arguments by malicious personalities—all these things are exposed in Fénélon's *Lettres en Réponse*, and in the *Réponse* itself. They are bad enough; but the student of controversy is accustomed to this imperturbable lying, to these arts of insinuation. The most detestable feature of all in the part played by Bossuet, lies in that sleek cant and tearful unction

with which he calumniates—as though it almost broke his heart to write what he exults in writing. Well might Fénélon request that he would not weep over him so profusely while he tore him in pieces, and desire fewer tears and more fair play! See the Preface to the *Réponse*; *Réponse*, 59; and *Réponse aux Remarques*, § vi.

³² Bausset, iii. 63, 69; Upham, vol. ii. p. 289.

was delivered on the 12th of March, 1699. The submission of Fénelon is famous in history. He received the intelligence as he was about to ascend the pulpit ; he changed his subject, and preached a sermon on the duty of submission to superiors.³³ Bossuet endeavoured, in vain, to represent the obedience which was the first to pronounce the sentence of self-condemnation, as a profound hypocrisy.

XIII.

Madame Guyon lingered for four years a solitary prisoner in the dungeons of the Bastile. In the same tower was confined the Man of the Iron Mask, and she may have heard, in her cell, the melancholy notes of the guitar with which her fellow-prisoner beguiled a captivity whose horrors had then lasted seven-and-thirty years. There, a constitution never strong, was broken down by the stony chill of rigorous winters, and by the noxious vapours which steamed from the stagnant moat in summer.³⁴ She was liberated in 1702, and sent to Blois,—a picturesque old city, whose steep and narrow streets, cut into innumerable steps, overlook the Loire,—crowned on the one side by its fine church, and on the other by the royal chateau, memorable for the murder of the Guises ; its massive proportions adorned by the varying tastes of successive generations, then newly beautified after the designs of Mansard, and now a ruin, the delight of every artist. There she lived in quiet, sought out from time to time by visitors from distant provinces and other lands,—as patient under the infirmity of declining age as beneath the persecutions of her earlier years,—finding, as she had always done, some sweet in every bitter cup, and a theme for praise in every trial, purified by her long afflictions, elevated by her hope of glory, full of charity and full of peace, resigned and happy to the last. Her latest letter is dated in

1717,—Bossuet had departed, and Fénelon,—and before the close of that year, she also, the subject of such long and bitter strife, had been removed beyond all the tempests of this lower world.

In the judicial combats of ancient Germany, it was the custom to place in the centre of the lists a bier, beside which stood the accuser and the accused, at the head and at the foot, leaning there for some time in solemn silence before they laid lance in rest and encountered in the deadly shock. Would that religious controversialists had oftener entered and maintained their combat as alike in view of that final appeal in the unseen world of truth—with a deeper and more abiding sense of that supreme tribunal before which so many differences vanish, and where none but he who has striven lawfully can receive a crown. Bossuet was regarded as the champion of Hope, and drew his sword, it was said, lest sacrilegious hands should remove her anchor. Fénelon girded on his arms to defend the cause of Charity. Alas! said the Pope—heart-sick of the protracted conflict—they forget that it is Faith who is in danger. Among the many witty sayings which the dispute suggested to the lookers-on, perhaps one of the most significant is that attributed to the daughter of Madame de Sévigné. ‘M. de Cambray,’ said she, ‘pleads well the cause of God, but M. de Meaux yet better that of religion, and cannot fail to win the day at Rome.’ Fénelon undertook to show that his semi-Quietism was supported by the authority of ecclesiastical tradition, and he was unquestionably in the right. He might have sustained, on Romanist principles, a doctrine much less moderate, by the same argument. But it was his wish to render mysticism as rational and as attractive as possible; and no other advocate has exhibited it so purified from extravagance, or secured for it so general a sympathy. The principle of ‘holy indifference,’ however, must be weighed, not by the virtues

of Fénélon, but according to the standard of Scripture,—and such an estimate must, we believe, pronounce it mistaken.

XIV.

The attempt to make mysticism definite and intelligible must always involve more or less of inconsistency. Nevertheless, the enterprise has been repeatedly undertaken ; and it is a remarkable fact, that such efforts have almost invariably originated in France. Mysticism and scholasticism—the spirit of the cloud and the spirit of the snow—reign as rivals throughout the stormy region of the Middle Age. The reaction against the extreme of each nourished its antagonist. Hugo and Richard of St. Victor endeavoured to effect a union, and to reconcile these contending products of the heart and brain. In that ascetic abstraction, which hides in darkness all the objects of sense, they sought to develop, from the dull and arid stem of school divinity, the most precious blossoms of the feeling ; and their mysticism resembles those plants of the cactus-tribe which unfold, from their lustreless and horny leaves, gorgeous flowers, that illumine, with phosphoric radiance, the darkness of the tropical night. The Victorines were succeeded in the same path by Bonaventura, a Frenchman by education, if not by birth, more a schoolman than a mystic ; and, in the fifteenth century, by Gerson. These are mystics who have no tales to tell of inspiration and of vision—their aim is to legitimize rapture, to define ecstasy, to explain the higher phenomena of the spirit on the basis of an elaborate psychology, to separate the delusive from the real in mysticism, and to ascertain the laws of that mystical experience, of which they acknowledged themselves to be but very partially the subjects. With this view, Gerson introduced into mysticism, strange to say, the principle of induction ; and proposed, by a collection and comparison of recorded examples, to determine its theory, and decide its

practice. In the *Maxims of the Saints*, Fénelon carries out the idea of Gerson, as far as was requisite for his immediate purpose. Both are involved in the same difficulty, and fall into the same contradiction. What Molinos was to Fénelon, Ruysbroek was to Gerson. Fénelon wished to stop short of the spiritualism condemned as heretical in Molinos; Gerson, to avoid the pantheism he thought he saw in Ruysbroek. Both impose checks, which, if inefficacious, amount to nothing; if effective, are fatal to the very life of mysticism,—both hold doctrines, to which they dare not give scope; and both are, to some extent, implicated in the consequences they repudiate by the principles they admit.

Mysticism in France contrasts strikingly, in this respect, with mysticism in Germany. Speaking generally, it may be said that France exhibits the mysticism of sentiment, Germany the mysticism of thought. The French love to generalize and to classify. An arrangement which can be expressed by a word, a principle which can be crystallized into a sparkling maxim, they will applaud. But with them conventionalism reigns paramount—society is ever present to the mind of the individual—their sense of the ludicrous is exquisitely keen. The German loves abstractions for their own sake. To secure popularity for a visionary error in France, it must be lucid and elegant as the language—it must be at least an ingenious and intelligible falsehood; but in Germany, the most grotesque inversions of thought and of expression will be found no hindrance to its acceptability, and the most hopeless obscurity may be pronounced its highest merit. In this respect, German philosophy sometimes resembles Lycophron, who was so convinced that unintelligibility was grandeur, as to swear he would hang himself if a man were found capable of understanding his play of *Cassandra*. Almost every later German mystic has been a secluded student—almost every mystic of modern France has

been a brilliant conversationalist. The genius of mysticism rises, in Germany, in the clouds of the solitary pipe ; in France, it is a fashionable Ariel, who hovers in the drawing-room, and hangs to the pendants of the glittering chandelier. If Jacob Behmen had appeared in France, he must have counted disciples by units, where in Germany he reckoned them by hundreds. If Madame Guyon had been born in Germany, rigid Lutheranism might have given her some annoyance ; but her earnestness would have redeemed her enthusiasm from ridicule, and she would have lived and died the honoured precursor of modern German Pietism. The simplicity and strength of purpose which characterize so many of the German mystics, appear to much advantage beside the vanity and affectation which have so frequently attended the manifestations of mysticism in France. In Germany, theosophy arose with the Reformation, and was as much a theology as a science. In France, where the Reformation had been suppressed, and where superstition had been ridiculed with such success, the same love of the marvellous was most powerful with the most irreligious—it filled the antechamber of Cagliostro with impatient dandies and grandees, trembling, and yet eager to pry into the future—too enlightened to believe in Christ, yet too credulous to doubt the powers of a man before whose door fashion drew, night after night, a line of carriages which filled the street.

NOTE TO PAGE 245.

A full account of the proceedings against the Quietists will be found in the narrative above referred to and in Arnold's *Kirchen-und-Ketzer Geschichte*, th. III. cap. xvii.

The motive of Père La Chaise in urging this prosecution appears to have been twofold : partly, to start heretics whom his Most Christian Majesty might magnificently hunt, and still more to weaken the Spanish party and embarrass the Pope, who was suspected of leaning toward the house of Austria. The audacity of the Jesuits—so formidable always, from their numbers, their union, their unscrupulousness, and now emboldened by support so powerful, struck all

Rome with terror. A man widely reputed for sanctity, throughout a period of twenty years—an honoured guest within the walls of the Vatican—who had long enjoyed, and not yet forfeited, the warm friendship of the Head of the Church—was suddenly declared the most dangerous enemy to the faith of Christendom. To accomplish the ruin of this victim, a venerable pontiff was threatened with the most grievous insult which infallibility could suffer. Within a month, two hundred persons were thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition,—and many of these were eminent for rank, for learning, or for piety. Only the grossly stupid or the scandalously dissolute could feel themselves secure. To hint a question concerning the justice of a single step in prosecutions remarkable, even at Rome, for the baseness and illegality of their agents and their acts—to live a quiet and retiring life—to appear infrequently at confession or at mass,—these were circumstances sufficient to render any man suspected of Quietism; and if the informer were hungry, or a private enemy alert, from suspicion to conviction was but a step.

But the persecutors were destined to meet with many mortifications in their course. Molinos and his friend Petrucci—a bishop, and afterwards a cardinal—defended themselves, on their first summons, with such skill and intrepidity, that the writings which had been circulated against them were condemned as libellous. The case of Petrucci represents that of the great majority against whom the charge of Quietism was brought. Not an accusation could be substantiated, save this,—that blameless as his life might be, he had grown remiss in some of those outward observances which are the pride of Pharisaic sanctity. Thus defeated at the outset, the Jesuits were reinforced and rendered victorious by the falsehoods of D'Etrees, who refused to hear a word Molinos had to say in defence of his own writings. The Count and Countess Vespignani were arrested, with other persons, to the number of seventy. They were accused of omitting the exterior practices of religion, and of giving themselves to solitude and prayer. The Countess bravely answered, that she had discovered her manner of devotion only to her confessor; he must have betrayed her; who but idiots would confess, if confession was made the engine of the persecutor—if no secret was sacred—if to confess might be to lie at the mercy of a villain? Henceforward she would confess to God alone. A rank so high must be respected. Words so bold were dangerous. So the Vespignani were set free. The circular letter sent out against the Quietists was treated with indifference by most of the Italian bishops—not unleavened, many of them, by this obnoxious kind of piety. Nay, worse! for once, an epistle from the Inquisition was published. The unfortunate letter escaped somehow—was translated into Italian—all Rome was reading it. The world looked in on the procedure of the Holy Office, to the shame and bitter vexation of its holy men. It was said that the Inquisition collected some twenty thousand letters, or copies of letters, sent and received by Molinos, and that when he was arrested, twenty crowns' worth of letters addressed to him were seized at the post-office. So extended was the influence of the heretic—so little likely, therefore, to perish with him. Some ecclesiastics had the candour to admit that most of the Quietists showed themselves better instructed than their accusers, and confronted their judges so ably, with passages, authorities, and arguments, that they could only be silenced by authority and force.

The letter of Cardinal Caraccioli to Innocent, about the Quietists, represents them as persons who attempt passive mental prayer and '*contemplatio*,' without the previous preparation of the '*via purgativa*.' Dreadful to relate, some of them had been known to leave their rosaries unfingered, to refuse to make the sign of the cross, to declare crucifixes rather in their way than otherwise! They trusted rather to their inward attraction than to directors. Some, though

laymen, and though married, communed daily—an ominous sign—for it betokened the lowering (in their minds, at least) of that high partition wall, which Rome had made so strong, between clergy and laity—between the religious *par excellence* and the vulgar herd of Christians, who were to be saved only through the former. See Bausset's *Histoire de Fénelon*, liv. ii.; *Pièces Justificatives*, No. II.

NOTE TO PAGE 259.

Fénelon could with ease bring from the arsenal of tradition even more proofs than he needed for the establishment of his doctrine. No prevarication or sophistry could conceal the fact that Bernard, Albertus Magnus, Francis de Sales, Theresa, Catharine of Genoa, and other saints, had used language concerning pure love, authenticating more than all that Fénelon was solicitous to defend. Thus much was proven,—even subtracting those passages which Fénelon unwittingly cited from an edition of De Sales' *Entretiens*, said to be full of interpolations. The spiritual history of Friar Laurent and of Francis de Sales furnished actual examples of the most extreme case Fénelon was willing to put. Bossuet's true answer was the reply he gave on the question to Madame de la Maisonfort,—such rare and extraordinary cases should be left out of our consideration, they should not be drawn within the range of possible experience, even for Christians considerably advanced. (*Phelipeaux*, liv. i. pp. 165-176.) In dispute with Fénelon, instead of admitting the fact, as with La Maisonfort, the polemic gets uppermost, and he tries very dishonestly to explain away the language of De Sales, while he misrepresents and garbles that of Fénelon. See *Cinquième Lettre en Réponse à divers Ecrits*; *Première Lettre en Réponse à celle de M. L'Eveque de Meaux*; *Maximes des Saints*, art. v.

Fénelon draws a subtle distinction between the object of love and the motive of love. That love in God which renders him our eternal blessedness, is among the *objects* of our love—for God has so revealed himself, but is not the *motive* of it. (*Max. des Saints*, art. iv.) Do we desire happiness less, he asks, because we desire it from a worthy motive,—i.e., as desired by God? Do we extinguish hope by exalting and regulating it? (*Entretiens sur la Religion*; *Œuvres*, tom. i. p. 35.) If any one of us knew that he should be annihilated at death, ought he less to love the infinitely Good? Is not eternal life a gift which God is free to grant or to withhold? Shall the love of the Christian who is to have eternal life be *less* than that of him who anticipates annihilation, just because the love of God to him is so much *more*? Shall such a gift serve only to make love interested? (*Sur le Pur Amour*, xix. Compare also *Max. des Saints*, art. 10, 11, 12; *Correspondance*, let. 43.)

Fénelon is very careful to state that disinterested love is put to its most painful proof only in rare and extreme cases,—that the love which is interested is not a sin, only a lower religious stage, and that he who requires that staff is to beware how he throws it aside prematurely, ambitious of a spiritual perfection which may be beyond his reach. Bossuet endeavoured to show that if Fénelon's doctrine were true, any love except the disinterested was a crime. (*Instructions et Avis*, &c., xx.; *Sur le Pur Amour*, p. 329; *Max. des Saints*, art. iii., and sundry qualifications of importance, concerning self-abandonment in the 'épreuves extrêmes,' art. ix.)

NOTE TO PAGE 259.

Such is the explanation in the letter to La Maisonfort. But Fenelon is not always—perhaps, could not possibly be—quite consistent with himself on this most delicate of questions. Beyond a doubt, the attempt practically to apply

this doctrine concerning reflex acts constitutes the morbid element in his system—is the one refinement above all others fatally unnatural. There is great truth in Fénelon's warnings against nervous, impatient introspection. Against an evil so prevalent, and so constantly fostered by the confessional and the directors, it was high time that some one should protest. But, alas! not only does Fénelon himself uphold, most zealously, that very directorship, but this strain after a love perfectly disinterested tempts the aspirant to be continually hunting inwardly after traces of the hated self, which will never quite vanish. Happy, according to Fénelon, is that religionist who can sacrifice, not only himself, but the sacrifice of himself—who burns the burnt offering—who gives up the consciousness of having given himself up—and who has reached, without knowing it, the pinnacle of Christian perfection. The reader will find specimens of his more guarded language in the letter referred to in the *Instructions et Avis*, &c. xx.; *Max. des Saints*, art. xiii.; *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. This last, a letter to Sœur Charlotte de St. Cyprien, is of importance, as containing definitions of mystical terms, similar in substance to those given in the *Maximes*, and moreover, highly approved by Bossuet, a year after the conferences at Issy. The strongest expressions are found in the *Instructions et Avis*, xxii. xxiii. He says,—Pour consommer le sacrifice de purification en nous des dons de Dieu, il faut donc achever de détruire l'holocauste; il faut tout perdre, même l'abandon aperçu par lequel on se voit livré à sa perte.—P. 342. Compare the allusion to the unconscious prayer of St. Anthony, *Max. des Saints*, art. xxi.

NOTE TO PAGE 259.

L'activité que les mystiques blâment n'est pas l'action réelle et la co-opération de l'âme à la grâce; c'est seulement une crainte inquiète, ou une ferveur empressée qui recherche les dons de Dieu pour sa propre consolation.—*Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. So also, in the letter to La Maisonfort, he shows that the state of passivity does not preclude a great number of distinct acts. This is what the mystics call co-operating with God without activity of our own—a subtlety which those may seek to understand who care. Fénelon means to forbid a selfish isolation, which, on pretence of quietude, neglects daily duty. True repose in God calmly discharges such obligations as they come. We have seen an example of this in St. Theresa. Fénelon is not prepared to go the length of John of the Cross, who denies our co-operation altogether.—*Maximes des Saints*, art. xxx. and xxix. Ils ne font plus d'actes empressés et marqués par une secousse inquiète: ils font des actes si paisibles et si uniformes, que ces actes, quoique très-réels, très-successifs, et même interrompus, leur paraissent ou un seul acte sans interruption, ou un repos continu.

Fénelon is at any time ready to endorse all the counsels of John of the Cross, as to the duty of leaving behind (*outré-passer*) all apparitions, sounds, tastes, everything visionary, sensuous, or theurgic. With the grosser forms of mysticism he has no sympathy. He even endeavours to represent St. Theresa as an advocate of the purer and more refined mysticism, adducing the scarce-attainable seventh *Morada*, and overlooking the sensuous character of the preceding six. Theresa might, in the abstract, rate the visionless altitude above the valley of vision; but she preferred, for herself, unquestionably, the valley to the mountain. (*Max. des Saints*, xix.; *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiv. xvi. xvii.) In a letter on extraordinary gifts, he repeats the precept of John—'Aller toujours par le non-voir;' and 'outré-passer les grands dons, et marcher dans la pure foi comme si on ne les avait pas reçus.' He consigns the soul, in like manner, to a blank abstraction—to what Luther would have called 'a void tedium.' Tout ce qui est goût et ferveur sensible, image créé, lumière distincte et aperçue, donne une

fausse confiance, et fait une impression trop vive ; on les reçoit avec joie, et on les quitte avec peine. Au contraire, dans la nudité de la pure foi, on ne doit rien voir ; on n'a plus en soi ni pensée ni volonté ; on trouve tout dans cette simplicité générale, sans s'arrêter à rien de distinct ; on ne possède rien, mais on est possédé.—*Lettre xxiii.* The very acts of which Contemplation is made up, are, says Fénelon—'Si simples, si directs, si paisibles, si uniformes, qu'ils n'ont rien de marqué par où l'âme puisse les distinguer.'—*Max. des Saints*, art. xxi. What such acts can be, must remain for ever a mystery unfathomable. It is for these inexplicable '*actes distincts*' that the convenient '*facilité spéciale*' is provided. (*Correspondance*, lettre 43 ; comp. *Lettres Spirituelles*, xiii. 448.)

Fénelon is also careful to guard his mysticism against the pretences of special revelation and any troublesome insubordination on the part of the 'inner light,' or l'attrait intérieur. The said 'attrait,' he justly observes, 'n'est point une inspiration miraculeuse et prophétique, qui rende l'âme infaillible, ni impeccable, ni indépendant, de la direction des pasteurs ; ce n'est que la grâce, qui est sans cesse prévenante dans tous les justes, et qui est plus spéciale dans les âmes élevées par l'amour désintéressé,' &c.—*Loc. cit.* p. 450 ; *Max. des Saints*, art. xxix. and vii.

NOTE TO PAGE 262.

Fénelon gives his reasons for refusing to affix his approval to Bossuet's book, in letters to Tronson and Madame de Maintenon, and in the *Réponse*. (*Correspondance*, lettres 52, 53, 57 ; *Réponse à la Relation*, chap. v.) It was a strong point for Fénelon against Bossuet that the latter had administered to Madame Guyon the sacraments, and granted her a favourable certificate, after reading the very books in which he professed afterwards to discover the most flagitious designs. In thinking better, therefore, of her intentions than of her language, Fénelon was no more her partisan or defender than Bossuet himself had been, up to that point. The act of submission Bossuet made her sign was not a retraction of error, but simply a declaration that she had never held any of the errors condemned in the pastoral letter,—that she always meant to write in a sense altogether orthodox, and had no conception that any dangerous interpretation could be put upon the terms which, in her ignorance, she had employed. (*Réponse à la Relation*, chap. i.) Phelipeaux sees in everything Fénelon wrote—the notes for the *Maxims*—the memoranda he sent to Bossuet, only one purpose—an insane resolve to defend Madame Guyon at all costs. He chooses to imagine that every step taken by her was secretly dictated by Fénelon. In fact, however, from the time the first suspicions arose, Fénelon began to withdraw from Madame Guyon his former intimacy. Nothing could exceed his caution in the avoidance of all implication with one whose language was susceptible of such fatal misconstruction. He could probably have taken no better course. He endeavoured to retain the controversy about the real question, that she might be forgotten. But it soon became evident that he himself was the party attacked, and with a virulence for which the scandals attributed to Madame Guyon furnished an instrument too tempting to be neglected. The charges against Madame Guyon increased in magnitude—not with her resistance, for she made none—but with that of Fénelon. (*Réponse*, xxiii. lxxxiv. lx.)

NOTE TO PAGE 264.

The motives with which Fénelon wrote and published the *Maxims* are fully stated by himself. It was not to defend Madame Guyon, but to rescue the doctrine of pure love, threatened with destruction by the growing prejudice against the religion of the 'inward way.' It was not to excuse the Quietists,

but to preserve, by due distinctions, souls attached to the true mysticism, from the illusions of the false. It was to give their full and legitimate scope to those venerable principles which a heretical Quietism was said to have abused. Mysticism was not to be extinguished by denying the truth it contained. Let, then, the true be separated from the false. The *Maxims* were believed by Fénelon to contain no position contrary to the articles of Issy. The passages which cannot be reconciled with the limitations imposed by those articles are not his own, but quotations from De Sales and others. The Andalusian Illuminati had rendered the greatest saints suspected. Theresa, Alvarez, John of the Cross, stood in need of defenders. Ruysbroek, whom Bellarmine called the great contemplatist; Tauler, the Apostle of Germany, had required and had found champions, the one in Dionysius the Carthusian, the other in Blossius. The Cardinal Berulle felt compelled to enter the lists on behalf of St. Francis de Sales, for suspicions had been cast upon the wisdom of that eminent saint. Such examples might well alarm all those whose religion was imbued with mysticism,—all those to whom a faith of that type was a necessity. Let it be openly declared where the path of safety lies, and where the dangers commence. The *Maxims* were to furnish a *via media* between the extreme of those who repudiated mystical theology altogether, and the excesses of the false mystics. The doctrines stigmatized as false throughout the *Maxims*, are what Fénelon supposed to be the tenets of Molinos, judging from the sixty-eight propositions condemned at Rome. The *Faux*, therefore, which opposes to the *Vrai* is, for the most part, a mere chimera—made up of doctrines really believed by scarcely any one,—only taught, perhaps, now and then, by designing priests to women, for the purposes of seduction. See the 'Avertissement' to the *Maxims*; *Pre-mière Lettre en Réponse*, &c. p. 111; *Correspondance*, lettre 59; and the letter on the *Maxims*, to the Pope, *Phéliepeaux*, p. 239.

NOTE TO PAGE 265.

Among the expelled was the brilliant, unmanageable Madame de la Maisonfort—the last woman in the world to have been shut up in the small monotony of St. Cyr. The history of mysticism at St. Cyr is a miniature of its history at large. The question by which it is tried is simply practical. Will it subordinate itself? If so, let it flourish. If not, root it out. Jean d'Avila, in his *Audi, Filia, et Vide*, has a section entitled *Des Fausses Révélations*. The whole question turns on this point. Is the visionary obedient to director, superior, &c.? If so, the visions are of God. If not, the visions are of the Devil. (*Œuvres du B. Jean D'Avila, Audi, Filia, et Vide*, chapp. 50-55.)

Madame Guyon, in becoming a religious instructress, as she did, only followed examples honoured by the Romish Church. Angela de Foligni, the two Catharines of Siena and of Genoa, St. Theresa, and others, had become the spiritual guides of numbers, both men and women, lay and ecclesiastic. At another juncture the kind of revival introduced by Madame Guyon might have met with encouragement. But her tendency was precisely that of which the times were least tolerant, and her disposition to follow her inward attraction rather than the counsels of prelates was magnified to proportions so portentous as to exclude all hope. The mysticism of Fénelon, judged by the test of obedience, should certainly have been spared. With an anxiety almost nervous, he inculcates wherever he can, those precepts of abject servility towards the director which are so agreeable to his Church. Wherever the director is in question, we lose sight of Fénelon, we see only the priest. But neither his own sincere professions of submission, nor his constant effort to place every one else under the

feet of some ecclesiastic or other,* could save him from a condemnation pronounced, not on religious, but political grounds.

In this respect Fénelon was anything but the *esprit fort* which the scepticism of a later age so fervently admired. His letters on religious subjects abound in directions for absolute obedience, and in warnings against the exercise of thought and judgment on our own account. Though Madame de la Maisonfort knew herself utterly unfit for the religious vocation which Madame de Maintenon wished her to embrace, Fénelon could tell her that her repugnance, her anguish, her tears, were nothing, opposed to the decision of five courtly ecclesiastics, affirming that she had the vocation. He writes to say, *La vocation ne se manifeste pas moins par la décision d'autrui que par notre propre attrait.*—*Correspondance*, lettre 19. See also *Lettres Spirituelles*, 18, 19, 169. The inward attraction presents some perplexity. In one instance it is only another word for taste (*Ibid.* 35), and in another place the attraction of grace is equivalent to an act of observation and judgment (*Ibid.* 176). Here, with so many mystics, Fénelon can only follow the '*moi*,' from which he fancies he escapes (441). The knot of these interior difficulties is cut by the directorship.

If Fénelon speaks uncertainly as to what is the inward attraction, and what is not, much more would the majority of mystics be sorely perplexed in their own case. The mystics, bewildered and wearied with intense self-scrutiny, sees all swim before his eyes. He can be sure of nothing. Whatever alternative he chooses, he has no sooner acted on the choice than he finds self in the act, and fancies the other road the right one. He is distressed by finding inclination and inward attraction changing, while he gazes, into each other, and back again, times without number. He is afraid to do what he likes—this may be self-pleasing. He is afraid to do what he does not like—for this may be perverseness—some culpable self-will, at least. The life of a devotee, so conscientious and so unfortunate, is rendered tolerable only by the director. The man who can put an end to this inward strife about trifles—which are anything but trifles to the sufferer—is welcomed as an angel from heaven. Casuistry, the creature of the confessional, renders its parent a necessity. Fénelon laments the abuses of the system, but he will rather believe that miracles will be continually wrought, to rescue the faithful from such mischiefs, than question (as bolder mystics, like Harphius had done) the institution itself. Even the mistakes and bad passions of superiors will be wrought into blessings for the obedient. (*Sur la Direction*, pp. 677, 678.

CHAPTER III.

All opinions and notions, though never so true, about things spiritual, may be the very matter of heresy, when they are adhered to as the principle and end, with obstinacy and acquiescence ; and, on the contrary, opinions and speculations, however false, may be the subject of orthodoxy, and very well consist with it, when they are not stiffly adhered to, but only employed in the service of disposing the soul to the faith of entire resignation, which is the only true orthodoxy wherein there can be no heresy nor capital errors.—POIRET.

WILLOUGHBY. I think, Atherton, you have been somewhat too indulgent on that question of disinterested love. To me it appears sheer presumption for any man to pretend that he loves God without any regard to self, when his very being, with its power to know and love, is a gift—when he has nothing that he did not receive,—when his salvation is wholly of favour, and not of merit,—and when, from the very first, he has been laid under an ever-increasing weight of obligation beyond all estimate. On this matter Oliver Cromwell appears to me a better divine than Fénelon, when he writes, ‘I have received plentiful wages beforehand, and I know that I shall never earn the least mite.’

GOWER. Yet Fénelon bases disinterested love on the doctrine which denies to man all possibility of merit.

ATHERTON. I think Willoughby looks at Fénelon’s teaching concerning disinterested love too much apart from his times and his Church. Grant that this disinterestedness is a needless and unattainable refinement, savouring of that high-flown, ultra-human devotion so much affected by Romish saintship—still it has its serviceable truth, as opposed to the servile and mercenary religionism which the Romanist system must ordinarily produce.

WILLOUGHBY. It is the less of two evils, perhaps ; but, let divines say what they will, men cannot abjure self as such a doctrine requires. Man may ask it of his fellow-men, but God does not require it of them, when he tells them He would have all men to be saved. That inalienable desire of individual well-being, to which God appeals, these theologians disdain.

GOWER. But man comes into this world to live for something higher than happiness.

WILLOUGHBY. That depends on what you mean by the word. Of course, life has a purpose far above that snug animalism which some men call happiness. In opposition to *that*, the outcry revived of late against happiness, as a motive, has its full right. But I mean by happiness, man's true well-being—that of his higher, not his lower nature—that of his nature, not for a moment, but for ever. With such happiness, duty, however stern, must always ultimately coincide. I say, man was formed to desire such a realisation of the possibilities of his nature, that to bid him cease or slacken in this desire is a cruelty and a folly, and that the will of God ought never for an instant to be conceived as hostile to such well-being. If He were, why hear we of Redemption? And I may point with reverence to the Incarnate Perfectness, 'who, *for the joy that was set before him*, endured the cross ;' he would die to know the blessedness of restoring to us our life. Only the most sublime self-sacrifice could account such a result a recompense ; and that recompense he did not refuse to keep constantly in view.

ATHERTON. Your dispute is very much a question of words. True self-annihilation certainly does not consist in being without a personal aim, but in suppressing all that within us which would degrade that aim below the highest.

GOWER. The Quietists are right in undervaluing, as they do, mere pleasurable feeling in religion.

ATHERTON. Quite so : in as far as they mean to say by such

depreciation that God may be as truly near and gracious in spiritual sorrow as in spiritual joy,—that inward delights and blissful states of mind are not to be put virtually in the place of Christ, as a ground of trust—that the witness of the Spirit does not evince itself in the emotional nature merely, but is realised in the general consciousness of a divine life, which is its own evidence. But I think the Quietists too much overlook the fact that peace, rising at times to solemn joy, is after all, the *normal* state of the Christian life, and as such, always a legitimate object of desire.

GOWER. As to disinterested love, once more, may we not take Bunyan as a good example of the mean between our two extremes? When in prison, and uncertain whether he might not soon be condemned to die, the thought came into his mind:—Suppose God should withdraw Himself at the very last moment—fail to support me at the gallows—abandon me. But he resisted the temptation like a man. He tells how he said within himself, ‘If God doth not come in (to comfort me), I will leap off the ladder even blindfold into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. It was my duty,’ he declared, ‘to stand to His word, whether He would ever look upon me, or save me at the last, or not.’

WILLOUGHBY. I can understand Bunyan. He was *driven* to that self-abandonment, and his faith made its brave stand there; he did not *seek* it. But the Quietists would have us cultivate, as the habit of Christian perfection, that self-oblivion which is, in fact, only our resource in the hottest moment of temptation. Why shut ourselves up in the castle-keep, if not an outwork has been carried?

ATHERTON. What a torrent of cant and affectation must have been set a flowing when Quietism became the fashion for awhile! What self-complacent chatter about self-annihilation; and how easily might the detail of spiritual maladies and

imaginary sins be made to minister to display ! Is it not thus Pope describes Affectation ?—how she

Faints into airs, and languishes with pride,
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe
Wrapt in a gown for sickness, and for show.

GOWER. That reminds me of Zoilus, pretending to be ill, that he might exhibit to his friends the new purple counterpane just come from Alexandria.

WILLOUGHBY. But I can imagine some, in earnest, seeking refuge in Quietism—doing so rather in desperation than in aspiration—heart sick, weary of the world. Such would find but cold comfort. In vain would they be surrounded with offers of supersensible manifestations, divine touches, tastes, illapses—ethereal, super-angelic—not to say superhuman, fare. Craving some tangible consolation, some food adapted to their nature, they would be mocked with these pictures of a feast,—with promise of the sustenance proper only to some other race of creatures.

ATHERTON. As though one should feed a sick lion on gingerbread and liqueurs.

GOWER. Or one might liken such poor disappointed creatures to the lamb brought into the churches on St. Agnes' day, reclined on its cushion fringed with gold, its ears and tail decked with gay ribbon,—bleating to church music—petted and adorned, in a manner to it most unintelligible and unsatisfying—and seeming, to the ear of the satirist, to cry all the while,—

Alack, and alas !
What's all this white damask to daisies and grass !

KATE. Helen and I were much interested in that old book you lent us, Mr. Atherton, *The Life of Mistress Antonia Bourignon*,¹ an excellent woman, shamefully persecuted.

¹ See Note on p. 289.

ATHERTON. I think so. She took upon herself, you see, to rebuke the Church as well as the world.

MRS. ATHERTON. And had large property left her, which excited the cupidity of those Fathers of the Oratory, who gave her such trouble.

GOWER. I never heard of her before.

ATHERTON. Her Quietism was very similar to that of Madame Guyon, but she was not, like her, mixed up with a controversy famous in history. She found, however, a faithful Fénélon in her accomplished disciple, Peter Poiret,² a liberal and large-minded Quietist, whose mysticism may be said to occupy a position between that of the German Theology and our English Platonists.

WILLOUGHBY. I greatly enjoyed reading some parts of his *Divine Economy*. Tennyson's stanza expresses the spirit of his theology :—

Our little systems have their day ;
They have their day and cease to be :
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

ATHERTON. Yet his six volumes add one more to our many systems. The vitiating element, in a theology otherwise very fairly balanced, is the extreme to which he carries the doctrine of passivity. In religion, he will have the understanding utterly inert.³

WILLOUGHBY. Yet he uses, very effectively, in his writings, the faculty he calls on us to resign.

ATHERTON. It is very common with mysticism to demand, in that way, a sacrifice which it does not make itself. With Poiret, Philosophy, Criticism, and Rhetoric, are the curse of the Church—the sources of all false theology.

WILLOUGHBY. Still there is much truth in his assertion that

² See Note on p. 290.

³ See Second Note on p. 290.

all positive religion accomplishes its purpose only as it leads to a filial subjection of the soul to God—as it conducts men, beyond itself, to immediate intercourse with Deity.

ATHERTON. William Law has the same idea : it constitutes, with him, the *natural* basis of all revealed religion.

WILLOUGHBY. It is mainly on this ground, I suppose, that Poiret adopts an eschatology more mild than that of the Calvinism which he forsook. He is not without his hopes concerning heathens hereafter. He believes in a state of purification after death, for those who departed, in a state of grace, but not yet ripe for the full enjoyment of heaven.

ATHERTON. It is significant that the first step taken by Protestant Mysticism, after departing from Calvinistic, Lutheran, or Anglican orthodoxy, should always be an endeavour to mitigate the gloom which hangs over the doctrine of the future state.

MRS. ATHERTON. I have also been reading M. Eynard's *Life of Madame de Krüdener*. She appears to me an inferior Madame Guyon—falling very short of her predecessor in real elevation of soul and power of mind, and decidedly more credulous.

ATHERTON. She was never chastened by trials so severe as those which befel Madame Guyon or Antoinette Bourignon. I do not think her insincere altogether,—she meant well, and often deceived herself ; but she never thoroughly conquered her inordinate vanity and love of display. When her novel of *Valerie* had outlived its day of puffery—when she had ceased to shine in the world of fashion, she achieved distinction as a seeress and guide of souls at the Hotel Montchenu.

WILLOUGHBY. A tuft-hunting sort of Quietism, hers. What a picture Talleyrand gives of the evening religious service in her drawing-room, when the allies were in Paris. The Emperor Alexander was a frequent visitor, prominent among notabilities

from every court in Europe. M. Empeytaz, in his gown, prayed and preached; Madame de Krüdener, with her blue eyes and long dark locks, would converse on the interior life, with guest after guest, in the inner apartment, or haply come forward and deliver a prophecy.⁴

ATHERTON. She had all the tact of a woman of the world, an impressive manner, and a fascinating gift of utterance. Her mysticism received its prophetic impulse chiefly from the predictions of a pretended clairvoyante, managed by a knave.⁵

MRS. ATHERTON. Jung Stilling and Swedenborg had also their share in giving that bent to her enthusiasm. I think she may have done good in some quarters.

ATHERTON. Very likely. The world is seldom the worse for the shock it receives when some one speaks out a strong belief in unseen realities, even though not always in the wisest way.

⁴ See *Revelations from the Life of Prince Talleyrand*; and compare Eynard, *Vie de Madame de Krüdener*, chap. xvii. Madame de Genlis writes of her, 'Me. de Krüdener disait les choses les plus singulières avec un calme qui les rendait persuasives; elle

était certainement de très bonne foi; elle me parut être aimable, spirituelle et d'une originalité très piquante.'—P. 30.

⁵ See the whole story of the pastor Fontaine and Maria Kummerin, in Eynard.

NOTE TO PAGE 286.

An anonymous work, entitled *An Apology for M^e. Antonia Bourignon* (Lond. 1699), contains an account of her life. It was not her design to found a sect, for she taught that of sects there were too many: exclusive formulas and hostile systems had corrupted Christendom, and made it a very Babel. She wished to forsake the world, with a few associates, bound by no vows, distinguished by no habit, working with their hands, and giving themselves to prayer and meditation. She was much resorted to by religious persons of every communion, as a guide to the higher degrees of the Christian life. She believed that special light was granted her for the interpretation of Scripture, and that it was her mission to recall the Church from formalism and human notions to spirituality and Quietist devotion. She appears to have been truly successful in awakening and stimulating religious aspiration in very many minds, till the storm of persecution, raised by her sweeping censure of the ecclesiastical world, drove her from one hiding-place to another, throughout Schleswig and Holstein. She died, at last, impoverished and deserted, concealed in a wretched lodging at Amsterdam.

Her letters are those of a pious and sensible woman, clear-headed, precise, and decided in vexatious business details, and singularly free from all obscurity or rhapsody. Swammerdam, the naturalist, was one of her disciples. Her Quietism was a welcome doctrine to many among Romanists, Lutherans, and Calvinists. Her bitterest persecutors were found among the clergy of every denomination. The Jesuits of Frederickstadt wished for fuel to burn her. The priests of the Oratory at Mechlin defrauded her of her property. Lutheran and Calvinist pastors alike, wrote, spoke, and preached against her with such virulence that the zealous populace of Flensburg were ready to tear her in pieces for the glory of God. (*Life*, pp. 310-313. *Comp. Letters* xxii. xxiii. xxiv. : *A Collection of Letters written by Mrs. A. Bourignon*, Lond. 1708.)

NOTE TO PAGE 287.

Poiret was a Calvinistic clergyman, who, after his acquaintance with Antoinette Bourignon, and much reading of mystical writers, relinquished his office. In his retirement he wrote a number of theological works, of which the best known is his system of divinity, entitled *The Divine Economy*. He possessed a goodly measure of that scholarship and philosophic culture which, as a mystic, he at once uses and depreciates.

Our higher faculty—the understanding, or intellect, he calls it—is 'not (like what he terms 'reason') a limited capability ; but 'being made for God is in a manner infinite, so as to be able to exert infinite acts, that is, to raise itself up to the contemplation of God as incomprehensible, infinite, and above all particular forms of conceiving him.' If, therefore, we make an absolute surrender of this faculty to God, and so, by a passive 'implicit faith,' yield ourselves up to whatsoever He may be pleased to communicate to us, we receive Him 'in a manner worthy of Him, above all particular and bounded conception, light, and sentiment.' Then, he says, we practically own this fundamental truth, 'that God is infinite and incomprehensible ; that he is a Light, a Good, a Wisdom, a Power, a Justice,—in a word, a Being above all comprehension and thought.' He bids us remember that our apprehensions of God, however true, as derived from his own word and from particular communications of his own, are necessarily partial and imperfect, so that 'a true and pure faith, while embracing the particular divine lights, will not regard chiefly the particular forms, but the infinite God that is annexed to them, and comprehends in himself infinitely more than the particulars he has disclosed to us.' (*Div. Econ.* vol. v. chap. iv. §§ 37-41.)

What is true in this doctrine has seldom been denied—viz. that beyond our highest apprehension of God, his nature extends infinitely. We know but parts of his ways. We know *that* infinity lies behind all our 'bounded conceptions ;' but *what* that infinity is, no surrender of the Intellect can disclose to us.

NOTE TO PAGE 287.

Here Poiret shall speak for himself :—

'The Understanding, to pass into the order of faith, must have these two conditions ; the first, that it be empty, and shut to all ideas of worldly things, both heavenly and earthly ; the second, that it keep itself open before God after an indeterminate and general manner, not particularly fixing upon anything. This being supposed, with the faith of desire afore-mentioned, God causes to rise in the soul his divine light, which is his eternal substantial word, which does himself modify (if I may so say), or rather fills and quickens the understanding of the soul, and enlightens it as he pleases.'—*Div. Econ.* p. 93.

'It will be objected, it may be, to what has been said, that this second condition required here of the intellect that means to be enlightened by Faith, is a state of idleness—time lost; and that it is an absurd thing not to make use of the understanding and faculties God has given us, nor so much as endeavour to excite in our minds good and bright thoughts. Here are several things tacked together, and most of them beside the purpose. For at present I am not treating of the means by which one may be introduced, or rather brought, as it were, to the threshold of faith, as I may say; nor of that imperfect and beginning faith, by me styled active. Nor yet do I say, that when one has been enlightened by the light of God, one is not to fix one's mind to the consideration of the lights held out by God: but what I say is this: I suppose a man has already had some glimpse of the divine light by the call of preventing grace, and that he has actively co-operated with it, by turning his understanding towards it, with particular desires of such and such lights; and, moreover, that, to confirm himself therein, he has deduced in his reason and his other inferior faculties, notions, ratiocinations, images, and words, and other particular exercises wherein he has been exercised long enough to be capable of ascending to the state of pure and altogether divine faith. Upon this supposition, the question is, whether one whose faith has as yet been but weak, and the small light he has had clouded and mixed with great darkness, prejudices, and errors, designing to clear the principles of the light he has from the aforesaid mixture, and desiring to see this divine light in its purity and more fully,—whether, I say, to this end he ought to apply thereto the activity of his understanding, of his meditations, reflections, and reasonings; or else, whether, all this apart, he ought to offer his understanding in vacuity and silence to the Son of God, the Sun of Righteousness, and the true Light of Souls? And this last is what we affirm, and against which the objections alleged are of no force.'—P. 100.

'Thus have I shown what God requires of the intellect in matters of faith—viz. a fund of mind wherein neither reason nor imagination do at all act, but where God only may be, and act brightly as He pleases, the soul meanwhile not adhering to the particular manners of God's acting, but merely because it is God acting, and God infinite and incomprehensible, who can dispose of His infinite ways above our understanding.'—P. 104.

Antoinette Bourignon found in Poiret a learned and philosophical disciple. He was to her, in some respects, what Robert Barclay was to George Fox. But her writings appear also to have awakened a response, of a more practical kind, in many devout minds of whom the world knew nothing. Throughout Germany and Holland, France and Switzerland, and in England also, were scattered little groups of friends who nourished a hidden devotion by the study of pietist or mystical writers. Arndt and Spener, Bourignon and Guyon, Labadie and Yvon, Thomas à Kempis, De Sales, or translations from the Spanish mystics, furnished the oil for their inward flame. Some withdrew altogether from the more active duties of life; others were separatists from the religion established around them. In some cases they held meetings for worship among themselves; in others, the struggles of a soul towards the higher life were only revealed to one or two chosen intimates. Whenever we can penetrate behind the public events which figure in history at the close of the seventeenth and the opening of the eighteenth century, indications are discernible which make it certain that a religious vitality of this description was far more widely diffused than is commonly supposed. A single example will be sufficiently suggestive. One M. de Marsay, who threw up his ensign's commission in the French army, and retired, with two friends, into seclusion, after the manner recommended by Antoinette Bourignon, left behind him an unpublished Autobiography. A copy from a translation of this curious narrative, in the possession of Mr. Tindall Harris, has been kindly

placed at my disposal by that gentleman. The copy was executed in 1773, by some one who had known De Marsay personally.

M. de Marsay was born at Paris, in 1688, of Protestant parents. A taste for devotional reading was fostered, in early youth, by the piety of his mother. Jurieu's well-known work on *Divine Love* found its place among such studies ; but none of the mystical writers. When he had entered the army, sometimes half the day, and often half the night also, was devoted to reading, meditation, and prayer. At one time he maintained an inward prayer for three or four days without intermission, though the regiment was on the march, and the troops under arms day and night. He fondly imagined that such a state would continue all his life. When the reaction came, his efforts to overcome the natural exhaustion and regain his spiritual joy were so strenuous and painful that his delicate frame gave way, and symptoms of consumption appeared. His distress at this time was similar to that of Madame Guyon, and of many others, at the earlier period of their entrance on the 'inward way.' Thomas à Kempis was in his hand ; but he could not yet understand the lesson which the more experienced mystics so earnestly inculcate,—that spiritual pleasures may be sought too greedily,—that we should persevere and trust, whether in sensible delight or obscurity, whether in fulness or 'aridity.' He lay sick at Lisle for three months, calmly looking for death, and then, to the surprise of all, recovered.

Meanwhile his friend, Lieutenant Cordier, has been reading Bourignon's *Lux in Tenebris*, in the camp before Bethune. He writes to De Marsay, saying that he was now convinced the devotion they had hitherto practised together was as nothing ; that he had resolved to quit the army and retire to some desert, there to live a life of poverty and devotion. M. Barratier, the chaplain of their regiment, was of like mind ; if De Marsay would read Madame Bourignon, he would probably arrive at the conclusion, and join them. So indeed it proved. De Marsay bought her nineteen volumes, and determined to live her 'poor and evangelical life.'

After many delays, he succeeded in obtaining his discharge (diligently reading, meanwhile, Theresa's Life, and John of the Cross) ; and at last, behold the three friends, in the spring of 1711, settled in a solitude such as they desired, at Schwartzenau, on the estate of the Countess Witgenstein. They rise at four, and begin the day by reading a chapter in the Bible. Cordier and De Marsay work in the field, and Barratier has breakfast ready for them at seven o'clock,—dry bread, of their own baking, and cold water. Till noon they spin, card, or knit wool ; Cordier goes out on some errand ; or De Marsay collects leaves, instead of straw, for their beds. At noon they dine, and Barratier (the cook and housekeeper) boils them the same food all the week through. One week it is pease, with bread ; another week, barley ; next, wheat, groats, or oatmeal pap ; and for drink sometimes, 'as a special treat,' boiled groats, in milk. After dinner one of them reads aloud from Bourignon's writings. Work again till four, and in the field till seven, when they sit down to supper, before a dish of pulse or salad, groats or turnips. Work again, in-doors, till nine, and then to bed. It was a rule that they should only speak to each other when it was absolutely necessary. They had no regular hours for prayer, but endeavoured (as Bourignon counsels) to do everything in a spirit of prayer, by living consciously in the presence of God, and referring all ceaselessly to Him.

Yet in this Paradise of asceticism De Marsay is not happy. The endeavour to retain constantly a general sense of the divine presence was far less unnatural and arduous than those protracted prayers and meditations at which he used to labour. But he has little enjoyment, and the clamorous demands of a large appetite sorely disturb his pious thoughts. See him, one day, sitting on the stump of a tree—the picture of despair. His soul is in the abyss. God seems

to have abandoned him to himself. What has he done? He has eaten a potato between meals! Only by the most ample confession, the most contrite self-abasement, can he recover peace. Terrible tyranny of the misguided conscience over the feeble judgment! Here was a moral power that might have made a hero; and it only drives a slave.

But the revulsion must come; and simultaneously the three anchorites remit their silence and their introversion, and (the spell once broken) chatter incessantly; now one, and now another, bursting into fits of unmeaning, involuntary laughter. Yet, through all such mortifying discouragement, all terror and temptation, De Marsay makes his way. He does but yield himself, in his helplessness, the more absolutely to God, to be delivered from his spiritual adversaries, if He wills, or to be abandoned to the countless possibilities of evil, within him and about him. Bourignon brought him to this point. So far she essays to guide souls in the 'interior way;' after that, the Divine Conductor leads them each as He will.

With poor Cordier it fared not so well. They had relaxed their rule, he said: he would leave them, and live entirely alone. So he was carried from extreme to extreme, till he reached a spurious resignation—a passivity which did not resist evil—a self-forgetfulness which ceased to recognise in himself his most dangerous enemy. From the height of spiritual pride he was precipitated into licence. A woman living near, with great affectation of sanctity, beguiled him into marriage. This female Tartuffe stood afterwards revealed in her real iniquity; and Cordier eventually returned to the world and a godless libertinism.

The Countess Witgenstein gave shelter, about this time, to a Lady Clara de Callenberg, who had suffered much domestic unhappiness on account of her pietism. This lady, considerably his senior, De Marsay saw, wooed, and won. Our pair of ascetics resolved to live a life of absolute continence, and De Marsay renders hearty thanks that (in spite of many temptations) they received grace to adhere to their determination. The good man's manner of reasoning is curious. The first thought of a change of life occurred to him one day, when sitting, 'in great calmness of mind,' under a tree, with his knitting-tackle. 'It was shown to me,—if it was true that I was willing to be the property of God without exception, it was his will that I should give Him the first proof thereof, in marrying the Lady Clara de Callenberg.' Barratier married them, and so the original association was finally dissolved.* The marriage was a very happy one, their principal outward trial arising from the frequent indisposition of his wife, who ruined her constitution by the miserable austerity of her diet. They were all but penniless; yet in this they rejoiced, as so much exercise of faith; and, indeed, such moderate means as they required were generally found forthcoming from one quarter or another.

De Marsay did not always remain in their hut at Schwartzenu; he journeyed to Switzerland to visit his mother, and again to Paris to see his brother, passing through Blois with letters to Madame Guyon, who died shortly before he reached that city. He travelled also repeatedly, in company with his wife, everywhere finding little circles of devout persons who received them with open arms. His narrative is full of the difficulties he found in ascertaining the divine will. Again and again does he discover, after an interval of years, that steps taken in the full persuasion that they were divinely directed, were, in reality, self-moved and erroneous. He fears to relax a severity, lest it should be self-indulgence; he fears to prolong it, lest it should be self-righteousness. After making one sacrifice, an additional one suggests itself as possible, and the longer the thought

* Barratier subsequently became minister to the French church in Halle.

is entertained, the more hopeless is peace of mind, till conscience has compelled that also ; and all this, sometimes from first to last, in fear and darkness. After dividing most of their little store among the poor, and selling their cottage as too large, Madame de Marsay can know no rest from her fears till the greater part of the money received has been also given away,—that the command may be obeyed, ‘Sell all that thou hast.’ Yet, through all self-made troubles, the genuineness of their religion shines out. He is ever humble, thankful, trustful. The reading of Madame Guyon weans him still farther from ‘sensible religious delights ;’ he enters calmly into the state of ‘dark faith ;’ begins to attach less importance to austerities ; loses much of his stiffness ; will attend public worship, and commune.

It is instructive to mark how few of those concerning whom he writes as having entered on the higher religious life, are found holding on in that course. After an interval of absence, he returns to a neighbourhood where he had known several such. He finds most of them in darkness and disappointment. They know not where their souls are, or what has come to them. Some are sunk in apathy. There are those who retain the form, though their fire has gone out long ago. Others have plunged from high profession into vices the most shameless. Yet a remnant are preserved through all the dangers of the way. Those perplexities and doubts which so frequently clouded the pathway of De Marsay, were probably his safeguard. In a life of such excessive introspection, a proper self-distrust must almost necessarily take the form of morbid scrupulosity. Even he had some narrow escapes, for which he does well to sing his lowly *Non nobis Domine!* He came afterwards to see how injurious was that withdrawal from all public worship (habitual with himself and his wife), in the case of those who had children. The offspring of such parents either grew up with a contempt for the ordinances of religion, or, finding their position as separatists hurtful to their advancement in the world, conformed, from interested motives.

In 1731, Count Zinzendorf came to Schwartzenau, and fascinated the De Marsays for a time. But De Marsay—so melancholy, and so given to solitude—was not one long ‘to find good for his soul’ in connexion with any religious community whatever. The Moravian converts met at first at his house, and he preached to them two or three times, with remarkable acceptance. But he detected pleasure to sense and self in such exercise of his gifts, and left them, resolving to yield himself up to the way of dark faith—to ‘die off from all the creatures’—to be as one excommunicate, and perishing in the wilderness of spiritual desertion for his unfaithfulness.

His difficulties were not diminished by mystical metaphysics. There is the Ground of his soul, and its inward attraction, to be followed, whatever reason, prudence, reflection, and even that which seems conscience, may urge or thunder against it. Whether the attraction be false or true, is exceedingly hard to determine ;—the issue frequently proves it the former, and that the common-sense folk about him were right after all. He arrives at a state—the wished-for state, in fact—free from all form, image, object of hope, &c.—a total blank of the senses and powers, and yet complains bitterly of the misery of that condition. Reason, internal sense, hope,—all have been abandoned, and yet, out of the internal ground there arises nothing in the shape of light or encouragement. The most harassing secular life, in which he would have been driven to look out of himself to Christ, had been truer and happier than this morbid introversion.

A single passage in his history (and there are several like it) is better than a treatise in illustration of the dangers which beset the notion of *perceptible* spiritual guidance. He is at Berleberg (1726), and hears of emigration thence to Pennsylvania. As he lies awake one night, it is strongly impressed upon his mind that he ought to go : he and his wife might realize a complete solitude in

that land of cheapness and freedom. For there was too much of the creature for him, even at Schwartzenau. They resolve, despite the earnest dissuasion of their friends, to join the next band of emigrants. News arrives that the greater part of those who last went out, died on the voyage, of disease or want. De Marsay finds nothing here to stagger him—for should he shrink from any such hazard? Again, it is shown him clearly that his wife will die if they sail—he seems to see her dead. They resolve, nevertheless, to yield themselves up to death; and spend wretched tearful days, nerved to that determination. At last, when again alone and in stillness, he receives an impression that it is *not* the will of God that he should go. He communicates the joyful tidings to his wife. She replies that she will go without him, unless she also receives a similar inward monition for herself. Such impression she happily obtains, and they remain. The sacrifice had been made, however, said De Marsay, the Isaac offered—but the victim was not to be actually slain. Finally, he discovers that his original impulse to go to America was ‘muddy and impure,’ arising from his excessive attachment to seclusion. So is it continually where men’s whims and fancies are identified with the oracles of an imagined perceptible guidance.

After many alternations—now rising to a love that casts out fear, and anon receding into gloom—his mind is mellowed and liberalized with advancing years. He no longer conceives it necessary to die to the creature by forsaking his religious friends. He lives at Wolfenbüttel, with Major Botticher, the husband of his niece, and has abandoned every ascetic singularity. He believes in the mystical states (for he has lived them), but he is no longer in any one of them. He looks away from himself only to Christ. He no longer identifies the mysteries of the interior way with spirituality. He has friendly intercourse with ministers—attends church—rejoices in the good work doing among Reformed and Lutherans everywhere.

Madame de Marsay died in 1742, in great mental distress; throughout several weeks previously having imagined herself abandoned and condemned. But her husband rejoiced in his assurance of her glorious rest. His end was a contrast to his distressful life. ‘I swim and bathe in joy,’ said he, ‘that I shall now soon obtain what, through the grace of our Saviour, I have so long and ardently wished and hoped for.’



BOOK THE ELEVENTH



MYSTICISM IN ENGLAND



CHAPTER I.

Is virtue then, unless of Christian growth,
Mere fallacy, or foolishness, or both?
Ten thousand sages lost in endless woe,
For ignorance of what they could not know?
That speech betrays at once a bigot's tongue;
Charge not a God with such outrageous wrong.
Truly not I—the partial light men have,
My creed persuades me, well employed, may save;
While he that scorns the noonday beam, perverse,
Shall find the blessing, unimproved, a curse.

COWPER.

ONE morning, Willoughby, calling on Atherton, found him and Gower looking over an old-fashioned little volume.

WILLOUGHBY. What have you there, Atherton?

ATHERTON. A curious old book—*The History of Hai Ebn Yokhdan*, by Abu Jaafer Ebn Tophail—an Arabian philosopher of Spain, writing in the twelfth or thirteenth century: 'done into English' by Simon Ockley.

GOWER (*to Willoughby*). I happened to be looking through Barclay's *Apology*—found him referring to this *History of Yokhdan*; and, behold, Atherton fetches me down, from one of his topmost dust-of-erudition strata there, the very book. It appears that good Barclay was so hard put to it, to find examples for the support of his doctrine concerning the Universal and Saving Light, that he has pressed this shadowy philosophical romance into the service, as an able-bodied unexceptionable fact:—sets up a fanciful ornament from the Moorish arabesques of Toledo as a bulwark for his theory.

WILLOUGHBY. Who, then, may this Hai Ebn Yokhdan be?

ATHERTON. Simply a mystical Robinson Crusoe. The book relates how a child was exposed in an ark upon the sea, drifted

to a Fortunate Island in the Indian Ocean, was there suckled by a roe, dresses himself with skins and feathers, builds a hut, tames a horse, rises to the discovery of 'One supreme and necessarily self-existent Being,' and does, at last, by due abstinence and exclusion of all external objects, attain to a mystical intuition of Him—a contemplation of the divine essence, and a consciousness that his own essence, thus lost in God, is itself divine :—all this, by the unaided inner Light. A Mussulman hermit who is landed on the island, there to retire from mankind, finds him ; teaches him to speak ; and discovers, to his devout amazement, that this Ebn Yokhdan has attained, first by deduction from the external world, and then, abandoning that, by immediate intuition, to the very truth concerning God which he has learnt through the medium of the Koran—the tee-totum mysticism of spinning dervishes included.¹

GOWER. Barclay, citing his Arab, points the moral as teaching 'that the best and most certain knowledge of God, is not that which is attained by premises premised, and conclusions deduced ; but that which is enjoyed by conjunction of the Mind of Man with the Supreme Intellect, after the mind is purified from its corruption and is separated from all bodily images, and is gathered into a profound stillness.'²

WILLOUGHBY. And the simple-hearted apologist of the Friends never suspected that this story was a philosopher's conjecture—Abu Tophail's ideal of what the inner light might be supposed to teach a man, in total seclusion?

ATHERTON. Not he. At any rate, Yokhdan figures in the first half-dozen editions of the *Apology*. I believe, in none later.

GOWER. A curious sight, to see the Arabian Sufi and the English Quaker keeping company so lovingly.

¹ See Note on p. 310.

² *Barclay's Apology*, propp. v. and vi. § 27, p. 194. Fourth Edition, 1701.

WILLOUGHBY. And yet how utterly repugnant to our English natures, that contemplative Oriental mysticism.

GOWER. In practice, of course. But in the theory lies a common ground.

ATHERTON. Our island would be but a spare contributor to a general exhibition of mystics. The British cloister has not one great mystical saint to show. Mysticism did not, with us, prepare the way for the Reformation. John Wycliffe and John Tauler are a striking contrast in this respect. In the time of the Black Death, the Flagellants could make no way with us. Whether coming as gloomy superstition, as hysterical fervour, or as pantheistic speculation, mysticism has found our soil a thankless one.

GOWER. I should like to catch a Hegelian, in good condition, well nourished with the finest of thrice-bolted philosophic grain, duly ignorant of England, and shut him up to determine, from the depths of his consciousness, what would be the form which mysticism must necessarily assume among us.

ATHERTON. He would probably be prepared to prove to us *à priori* that we could not possibly evolve such a product at all.

GOWER. Most likely. The torches of the Bacchantes, flung into the Tiber, were said still to burn; but what whirling enthusiast's fire could survive a plunge into the Thames? There could be nothing for it but sputtering extinction, and then to float—a sodden lump of pine and pitch, bobbing against the stolid sides of barges.

WILLOUGHBY. The sage might be pardoned for prophesying that our mysticism would appear in some time of religious stagnation—a meteoric flash spasmodically flinging itself this way and that, startling with its radiance deep slimy pools, black rich-oozing reaches of plurality and sinecure. Remembering the very practical mysticism of the Munster Anabaptists, he

might invest our mystical day-star with such 'trains of fire and dews of death;' or depict it as a shape of terror, like his who 'drew Priam's curtain at the dead of night;' heralding horrors; and waking every still cathedral close to dread the burning fate that befell, 'the topless towers of Ilium.'

ATHERTON. It certainly would have been hard to foresee that mysticism in England would arise just when it did—would go so far, and no farther:—that in the time of the Commonwealth, when there was fuller religious freedom by far, and, throughout the whole middle class, a more earnest religious life than at any former period of our history,—when along the ranks of triumphant Puritanism the electric light of enthusiasm played every here and there upon the steel which won them victory, and was beheld with no ominous misgiving, but hailed rather as Pentecostal effluence,—that, at such a juncture, Quakerism should have appeared to declare this liberty insufficiently free, this spirituality too carnal, this enthusiasm too cold,—to profess to eject more thoroughly yet the world, the flesh, and the devil,—to take its place in the confused throng contending about the 'bare-picked bone' of Hierarchy, and show itself not to be tempted for a moment by wealth, by place, by power,—to commit many follies, but never a single crime,—to endure enumerable wrongs, but never to furnish one example of resistance or revenge.

WILLOUGHBY. Well done, old England! It is gratifying to think that, on our shores, mysticism itself is less fantastic than its wont,—labours benignly, if not always soberly; and is represented, not by nightmared visionaries, or fury-driven persecutors, but by the holy, tender-hearted, much-enduring George Fox. The Muggletonians, Fifth-Monarchy men, and Ranters of those days were the exceptional mire and dirt cast up by the vexed times, but assuredly not the representatives of English mysticism.

ATHERTON. The elements of Quakerism lie all complete in the personal history of Fox ; and the religious sect is, in many respects, the perpetuation of his individual character ;—the same intellectual narrowness, incident to an isolated, half-disciplined mind, and the same large, loving heart of charity for all men. Remember how he describes himself as ‘ knowing pureness and righteousness at eleven years of age ;’ carefully brought up, so that from his childhood all vice and profaneness were an abomination to him. Then there were his solitary musings and sore inward battles, as he walked about his native Drayton many nights by himself : his fastings oft ; his much walking abroad in solitary spots many days ; his sitting, with his Bible, in hollow trees and lonesome places, till night came on. Because the religious teachers to whom he applied in his temptations to despair were unhappily incompetent to administer relief, he concludes too hastily that the system of ministerial instruction is more often a hindrance than a help to ‘ vital godliness.’ Because ‘ priest Stevens’ worked up some of his remarks in conversation into his next Sunday’s sermon,—because the ‘ ancient priest’ at Mansetter, to whom he next applied, could make nothing of him, and in despair recommended tobacco and psalm-singing (furthermore violating his confidence, and letting young George’s spiritual distresses get wind among a bevy of giggling milk-lasses),—because, after travelling seven miles to a priest of reputed experience at Tamworth, he found him after all ‘ but like an empty hollow cask,’—because horticultural Dr. Cradock of Coventry fell into a passion with him for accidentally trampling on the border of his flower-bed,—because one Macham, a priest in high account, offered him physic and prescribed blood-letting,—*therefore* the institution of a clerical order was an error and a mischief, mainly chargeable with the disputings of the church, and the ungodliness of the world. So, in his simplicity, he regarded it as a momentous

discovery to have it opened to him 'that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ.'³

GOWER. We may hold that without joining the Society of Friends.

ATHERTON. In like manner he argues that because believers are the temple of the Spirit, and many venerate places superstitiously, or identify church-going with religion, therefore 'steeple-houses' are a sinful innovation, diffusing, for the most part, darkness rather than light. Because it appeared to him that in his study of the Scriptures he knew Christ 'only as the light grew'—by inward revelation—'as he that hath the key did open,' therefore the doctrine of the inward Light is proclaimed to all as the central principle of Redemption.

GOWER. True. This proneness to extremes has led his followers often to attach undue importance to the mere externals of a protest against externalism. Those peculiarities of dress and speech are petty formalities unworthy of their main principle. In his '*Epistle to gathered Churches into outward forms upon the Earth*,' Fox can see scarce a vestige of spiritual religion anywhere beyond the pale of the Society of Friends.

ATHERTON. Yet ascetic and narrow on many points as he unquestionably was, and little disposed to make concession to human weakness, in practical charity he was most abundant. Oppression and imprisonment awakened the benevolent, never the malevolent impulses of his nature,—only adding fervour to his plea for the captive and the oppressed. His tender conscience could know no fellowship with the pleasures of the world ; his tender heart could know no weariness in seeking to make less its sum of suffering. He is a Cato-Howard. You see him in his early days, refusing to join in the festivities of the time called Christmas ; yet, if a stranger to the mirth, never

³ Fox's *Journal*, pp. 76-83.

to the mercy, of that kindly season. From house to house he trudges in the snow, visiting poor widows, and giving them money. Invited to marriage merry-makings, he will not enter the house of feasting; but the next day, or soon after, we find him there, offering, if the young couple are poor, the effectual congratulation of pecuniary help. In the prison-experiences of George Fox are to be found the germs of that modern philanthropy in which his followers have distinguished themselves so nobly. In Derby Jail he is 'exceedingly exercised' about the proceedings of the judges and magistrates—concerning their putting men to death for cattle, and money, and small matters,—and is moved to write to them, showing the sin of such severity; and, moreover, 'what an hurtful thing it was that prisoners should lie so long in jail; how that they learned badness one of another in talking of their bad deeds; and therefore speedy justice should be done.'⁴

WILLOUGHBY. How the spirit of benevolence pervades all the Journals of the early Friends. Look at John Woolman, who will neither write nor have letters written to him by post, because the horses are overwrought, and the hardships of the postboys so great. When farthest gone in rhapsody, this redeeming characteristic was never wanting to the Quakers. It may be said of some of them, as was said of dying Pope—uttering, between his wanderings, only kindness—'humanity seems to have outlasted understanding.'

ATHERTON. As to doctrine, again, consider how much religious extravagance was then afloat, and let us set it down to the credit of Fox that his mystical excesses were no greater. At Coventry he finds men in prison for religion, who declared, to his horror, that they were God. While at Derby, a soldier who had been a Baptist, comes to him from Nottingham, and argues that Christ and the prophets suffered no one of them

⁴ Fox's *Journal*, vol. i. p. 130.

externally, only internally. Another company, he says, came to him there, who professed to be triers of spirits, and when he questioned them, 'were presently up in the airy mind,' and said he was mad. The priests and magistrates were not more violent against him than the Ranters, who roved the country in great numbers, professing to work miracles, forbidding other enthusiasts to preach, on pain of damnation ; and in comparison with whom, Fox was soberness itself. Rice Jones, the Ranter, from Nottingham, prophesies against him with his company. At Captain Bradford's house, Ranters come from York to wrangle with him. In the Peak country they oppose him, and 'fall a-swearing.' At Swanington, in Leicestershire, they disturb the meeting—hound on the mob against the Friends ; they sing, whistle, and dance ; but their leaders are confounded everywhere by the power of the Lord, and many of their followers, says the *Journal*, were reached and convinced, and received the Spirit of God ; and are come to be a pretty people, living and walking soberly in the truth of Christ.'⁵ Such facts should be remembered in our estimate. Fox's inner light does not profess to supersede, nor does it designedly contradict, the external light of Revelation.

But hand me his *Journal* a moment. Here is a curious passage. It shows what a narrow escape Fox had of being resolved into an English Jacob Behmen.

He says, 'Now (he was about four-and-twenty at the time) was I come up in spirit, through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new ; and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness and innocence and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus ; so that I say I was come up to the state of

⁵ Fox's *Journal*, vol. i. pp. 109, 129, 232. Vaughan's *Hist. of England under the House of Stuart*, p. 539.

Adam which he was in before he fell. The creation was opened to me ; and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue. And I was at a stand in my mind whether I should practise physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtues of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord. But I was immediately taken up in spirit to see into another or more stedfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to Him in the power and light of Christ, should come up into that state in which Adam was before he fell ; in which the admirable works of the creation, and the virtues thereof may be known, through the openings of that divine word of wisdom and power by which they were made. Great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by words be declared ; but as people come into subjection to the Spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the word of wisdom that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.⁶

Here he has arrived on life's road where two ways meet ;—had he taken the wrong alternative, and wandered down that shadowy and mysterious theosophic avenue, ignorant that it was *no thoroughfare*, what a different history ! Imagine the intrepid, heart-searching preacher—the redoubted 'man in leather breeches'—transformed into the physician, haply peruked and habited in black, dispensing inspired prescriptions, and writing forgotten treatises on Qualities and Signatures, Sympathies and Antipathies. What a waste of that indomitable energy !

WILLOUGHBY. How destructive to human life might his very benevolence have proved.

⁶ *Journal*, vol. i. p. 95.

GOWER. Whatever direction the mysticism of a man like Fox might have taken, it must have been always actively benevolent. His mysticism is simple—no artificial stages of abstraction, mounting step by step above the finite, to a solitary superhuman sanctity. It is beneficent—his many and various spiritual distresses were permitted by God, he tells us, ‘in order that he might have a sense of all conditions—how else should he speak to all conditions?’⁷

WILLOUGHBY. Truly, metaphysical refinements and Platonic abstraction could have no charm for this most practical of mystics. What a contrast here is his pietism to that of Zinzen-dorf—as abundant in sentiment as Fox is devoid of it.

GOWER. Nicholas of Basle is more like Fox than any of the German mystics—much more so than Tauler.

ATHERTON. Fox is, as you say, eminently practical in one sense, yet not enough so in another. In one respect Behmen and Law are more practical than he, because more comprehensive. They endeavour to infuse a higher spiritual life into forms and communities already existing. Fox will have no steeple-houses, vestments, forms of prayer, no ministry, regularly paid and highly educated. Such a code is not practical, for it rests on an abstraction : it does not legislate for men as they are. Formalism does not lie in these outward things themselves—it consists in the *spirit* in which they are used. Here, you see, the mystic, who will always go beneath the surface to the reality, is too superficial. Formalism cannot be expelled by any such summary process. The evil lies deeper.

⁷ *Journal* p. 89. This theopathic mysticism is emphatically transitive. Every inward manifestation speedily becomes a something to be done, a testimony to be delivered. The Quaker is ‘exercised,’ not that he may deck himself in the glory of saintship, but to fit him for rendering service, as he supposes, to his fellows. The early fol-

lowers of Fox often caricatured the acted symbolism of the Hebrew prophets with the most profane or ludicrous unseemliness. Yet stark-mad as seemed the fashion of their denunciations, their object was very commonly some intelligible and actual error or abuse.

WILLOUGHBY. So with the asceticism of the Friends. The worldly spirit is too subtle to be exorcised by a strict outward separation between church and world. How much easier is total abstinence from scenes of amusement than temperance in money-getting.

GOWER. Yet I know men and women who pique themselves on their separateness from the world, because they were never seen at a concert, whose covetousness, insincerity, or censorious speech, proclaim them steeped in worldliness to the very lips.

WILLOUGHBY. What say you, Atherton, to the doctrine of the Universal Light? In their theory on this matter the mystics seem to divide into two classes. With the mystics of the fourteenth century there is still left in fallen man a native tendency Godward, on which grace lays hold. With Behmen and Fox, on the contrary, the inward Seed is a supernatural gift, distinct from conscience, reason, or any relics of natural goodness—the hidden word of promise, inspoken into all men, in virtue of the redeeming work of Christ.⁸

ATHERTON. I do not believe that fallen man required a divine bestowment of this kind—a supernatural soul within the soul, to give him a moral sense, and make him responsible. But I am so far a believer in the doctrine that I would not go beyond what is written, and rigidly confine all the benefits of Christ's redemption to those only who have had access to the Christian Scriptures. The words of the Apostle are still applicable,—‘Is he the God of the Jews only, is he not of the Gentiles also?’ I cannot suppose that all Pagan minds, past and present, have been utterly and for ever abandoned by the Divine Spirit, because the dispensation under which they have

⁸ Barclay's *Apology*, propp. v. and vi. 16. Sewell's *History*, p. 544. (Barclay's *Letter to Paets*); also p. 646 (*The Christian Doctrine of the People called Quakers*, &c., published 1693).

Compare J. J. Gurney's *Observations on the Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends*, chap. i. p. 59.

been placed is so much less privileged than our own. God has light enough to be *Himself*, in the twilight, even as in the noonday. Did He rule the rising and falling of ancient nations, working all things toward the fulness of time ;—did He care for the bodies of those heathen, with seedtime and harvest for his witness, and shall we suppose that He debarred Himself from all access to their souls?

WILLOUGHBY. Yet no doctrine we can hold on this question materially lessens the mystery of that dark fact—the prevalence of Evil.

ATHERTON. I am afraid not. Whether we call that better part of man the light of nature, conscience, or the internal Word, we must admit that it accomplished next to nothing for the restoration of the vast majority. We must not judge of the moral effects of heathendom by the philosophic few merely ; we must remember the state of the superstitious many. And mysticism will be the first to admit that an inoperative Christ (like that of the Antinomian, for example) is a deceptive phantom or a vain formula.

Our own position, however, is the same, let our theory or our hope, concerning others, be what it may. Whatever it may be possible (under the constitution of our nature) for the Spirit of God to make known inwardly to that man who is shut out from external teaching, it is quite certain that *we* shall receive no inward communications of gracious influence, while we neglect those outward means which are of divine appointment.

NOTE TO PAGE 300.

The full title of the work referred to runs as follows : *The Improvement of Human Reason, exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokhdan* : written in Arabick about 500 years ago, by Abn Jaafer Ebn Tophail. In which is demonstrated by what methods one may, by the mere *Light of Nature*, attain the knowledge of things *Natural* and *supernatural* ; more particularly the knowledg of God

and the affairs of another Life. Newly translated from the original Arabick by Simon Ockley, &c. 1708.

Ockley adds an Appendix, to guard the book from abuse by the Quakers, wherein he proposes to examine 'the fundamental error' of his author—viz. that 'God has given such a power or faculty to man whereby he may, without any external means, attain to the knowledge of all things necessary to salvation, and even to the Beatifick Vision itself, whilst in the state.'

The following is a specimen of the mystical progress which our Arabian Defoe describes his Crusoe as making,—precisely that with which Ebn Tophail was well acquainted, but which no real solitary Ebn Yokhdan could ever have struck out for himself.

'He began, therefore, to strip himself of all bodily properties, which he had made some progress in before, during the time of the former exercise, when he was employed in the imitation of the heavenly bodies; but there still remained a great many relicks, as his circular motion (motion being one of the most proper attributes of body), and his care of animals and plants, compassion upon them, and industry in removing whatever inconvenienced them. Now, all these things belong to corporeal attributes, for he could not see these things at first, but by corporeal faculties; and he was obliged to make use of the same faculties in preserving them. Therefore he began to reject and remove all those things from himself, as being in nowise consistent with that state which he was now in search of. So he continued, after confining himself to rest in the bottom of his cave, with his head bowed down and his eyes shut, and turning himself altogether from all sensible things and the corporeal faculties, and bending all his thoughts and meditations upon the necessarily self-existent Being, without admitting anything else besides him; and if any other object presented itself to his imagination, he rejected it with his utmost force; and exercised himself in this, and persisted in it to that degree, that sometimes he did neither eat nor stir for a great many days together. And whilst he was thus earnestly taken up in contemplation, sometimes all manner of beings whatsoever would be quite out of his mind and thoughts, except his own being only.

'But he found that his own being was not excluded from his thoughts; no, not at such times when he was most deeply immersed in the contemplation of the first, true, necessarily self-existent Being; which concerned him very much,—for he knew that even this was a mixture in this simple vision, and the admission of an extraneous object in that contemplation. Upon which he endeavoured to disappear from himself, and be wholly taken up in the vision of that true Being; till at last he attained it; and then both the heavens and the earth, and whatsoever is between them, and all spiritual forms, and corporeal faculties, and all those powers which are separate from matter, and all those beings which know the necessarily self-existent Being, all disappeared and vanished, and were as if they had never been; and amongst these his own being disappeared too, and there remained nothing but this one, true, perpetually self-existent Being, who spoke thus in that saying of his (which is not a notion superadded to his essence):—"To whom now belongs the kingdom? To this One, Almighty God."* Which words of his Hai Ebn Yokhdan understood and heard his voice; nor was his being unacquainted with words, and not being able to speak, any hindrance at all to the understanding him. Wherefore he deeply immersed himself into this state, and witnessed that which neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor hath it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive.'—

§§ 83, 84.

* Koran.

CHAPTER II.

And to such Enthusiasm as is but the triumph of the soul of man, inebriated, as it were, with the delicious sense of the divine life, that blessed Root, and Original of all holy wisdom and virtue, I am as much a friend as I am to the vulgar fanatical Enthusiasm a professed enemy.—HENRY MORE.

WILLOUGHBY. There is no mysticism in the doctrine of an immediate influence exercised by the Spirit of God on the spirit of man.

ATHERTON. Certainly not. It would be strange if the Creator, in whom we live and move, should have no direct access to the spirits of his own creatures.

GOWER. Does not your admission indicate the line between the true and the false in that aspiration after *immediate* knowledge, intercourse, or intuition, so common among the mystics? It is true that the divine influence is exerted upon us directly. But it is not true that such influence dispenses with rather than demands—suspends rather than quickens, the desires and faculties of our nature. So it appears to me at least.

ATHERTON. And to me also.

WILLOUGHBY. And again (to continue your negatives, Gower) it is not true, as some of the mystics tell us, that we can transcend with advantage the figurative language of Scripture; or gaze directly on the Divine Subsistence,—that we can know without knowledge, believe without a promise or a fact, and so dispense, in religious matters, with modes and media.

ATHERTON. Agreed. For ourselves, I believe we shall always find it true that the letter and the spirit do reciprocally set forth and consummate each other,—

‘ Like as the wind doth beautify a sail,
And as a sail becomes the unseen wind.’

We see truth in proportion as we are true. The outward written word in our hands directs us to the unseen Word so high above us, yet so near. The story of Christ's life and death is our soul's food. We find that we may—we must, sit in spirit at his feet, who so spake, so lived, so died. And, having been with him, we find a new power and attraction in the words; we are led by the Spirit of Christ in the keeping of those commandments, concerning which he said, 'The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.'

WILLOUGHBY. So Plotinus is right, in a sense, after all;—like only can know like. Our likeness to Christ is our true knowledge of him.

ATHERTON. Yes. But we become partakers of the unseen life and light of God only through the *manifestation* of that life and light, Christ Jesus. It is on this point that the theology of Fox is so defective.

WILLOUGHBY. His doctrine that the influence of the Spirit is *perceptible*, as well as immediate, is still more questionable, surely?

GOWER. Perceptible! aye, and physically perceptible, he will have it, in some cases,—manifested in a tremulous agitation of the frame.

WILLOUGHBY. True. The convulsive movements among the Protestant peasantry of the Cevennes are a similar instance. This spasmodical religious excitement is in a high degree infectious when many are assembled together.

ATHERTON. Yet we should not reject the doctrine of perceptible spiritual guidance because it is so liable to abuse. My objection is that I have never seen satisfactory proof adduced. Do not let us think, however, that we escape from the danger of self-delusion by denying this doctrine, and can afford to be careless accordingly. You often see persons who would think the Quaker belief a dangerous superstition, unscrupulously

identifying their personal or party interests with the cause of God, as though they believed themselves divinely commissioned, and could not possibly be liable to deception.

WILLOUGHBY. Here you see the value of the Quaker doctrine concerning stillness and quiet. The soul must be withdrawn in a silent waiting, and so hearken for the divine voice. The impulses which stir in the unallayed tumult of the feelings are the promptings of passion or of self, not of God. Wherever the belief in perceptible guidance is entertained, this practice of tranquil tarrying should accompany it, as its proper safeguard.

ATHERTON. The Quakers are wrong, I think, in separating particular movements and monitions as divine. But, at the same time, the 'witness of the Spirit,' as regards our state before God, is something more, I believe, than the mere attestation to the written word.

WILLOUGHBY. The traditional asceticism of the Friends is their fatal defect as a body.

ATHERTON. And their proneness to hazard good principles by pushing them to some repulsive extreme. Thus, they propose to abolish physical force by yielding everything to it;—to put an end to war by laying Europe at the feet of a great military power,—by apologizing for the oppressor and reviling those who resist him.

GOWER. I believe the man who says to me, I am trying to love my neighbour as myself: I suspect him who professes to love him better. His profession is worse than worthless unless he be consistent, and will allow himself to be swindled with impunity.

ATHERTON. We may well be suspicious when we see this super-Christian morality defended by arguments which can only be valid with the meanest and most grovelling selfishness. Such ethics are, in promise, more than human; in performance—less.

WILLOUGHBY. But, leaving this question, I am sure no sect which systematically secludes itself from every province of philosophy, literature, and art, can grow largely in numbers and in influence in a state of society like ours.

GOWER. Our English Platonists contrast strongly, in this respect, with George Fox and his followers.

WILLOUGHBY. How incomprehensible must have been the rude fervour and symbolic prophesyings of the Quakers to the refined scholarship and retiring devotion of men like More and Norris, Gale and Cudworth. But can you call them mystics?

ATHERTON. Scarcely so, except in as far as Platonism is always in a measure mystical. A vein of mysticism peeps out here and there in their writings. Cold rationalism they hate. They warm, with a ready sympathy, to every utterance of the tender and the lofty in the aspirations of the soul. But their practical English sense shows itself in their instant rejection of sentimentalism, extravagance, or profanity. This is especially the case with More—as shrewd in some things as he was credulous in others, and gifted with so quick an eye for the ridiculous.

GOWER. Delightful reading, those racy pages of his, running over with quaint fancies.

ATHERTON. More's position as regards mysticism is, in the main, that of a comprehensive and judicial mind. He goes a considerable distance with the enthusiast,—for he believes that love for the supreme Beautiful and Good may well carry men out of themselves; but for fanatical presumption he has no mercy.¹

¹ Let the reader consult his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, or read his caustic observations upon the *Anima Magica Abscondita*, and his *Second Lash of Alazonomastix*. Among the

high-flyers of his day, there appear to have been some who spoke of being 'goddied with God,' and 'Christed with Christ,' much after the manner of some of Eckart's followers.

WILLOUGHBY. The Romanist type of mysticism would be the most repugnant of all, I should think, to these somewhat free-thinking English scholars.

ATHERTON. So I have found. More has no notion of professing to give up his reason, like Poiret; still less of awaiting a suspension of our powers, like John of the Cross. He believes that 'the Spirit doth accomplish and enlarge our humane faculties.'²

GOWER. Yet Norris is less remote than More from the Romish mysticism, is he not? I mean that his Platonism seemed to me a little more monastic, and less philosophical.

ATHERTON. He has, it must be confessed, his four gradations of love—akin to the class-religion of the Romish Church;—as though a certain degree were incumbent on all Christians, but higher stages of devout affection (above mere duty) were set before the eminently religious.³ Yet let us do full justice to the good sense of that excellent man. The Quietist doctrine of unconsciousness appears to him an unnatural refinement. He cannot conceive how it should be expected that a man was to be 'such an America to himself,' as not to know what his own wishes and attainments are. The infused virtue of the Spanish mystics appears to his discriminating eye 'as great a paradox in divinity, as occult qualities in philosophy.'⁴

WILLOUGHBY. And none of them, I think, distress themselves, as did Fénelon, about purely disinterested love.

ATHERTON. They are too close followers of Plato to do that. They do not disguise their impatience of the bodily prison-

² 'But now seeing the *Logos* or steady comprehensive wisdom of God, in which all Ideas and their respects are contained, is but *universal stable reason*, how can there be any pretence of being so highly inspired as to be blown above reason itself, unlesse men will fancy themselves wiser than God, or their understandings above the natures

and reasons of things themselves.'—Preface to the *Conjectura Cabbalistica*.

³ See Norris's *Miscellanies* (1699); *An Idea of Happiness: enquiring wherein the greatest happiness attainable by Man in this Life does consist*, pp. 326-341.

⁴ *Miscellanies*, p. 276 (in a Discourse on Rom. xii. 3), and p. 334.

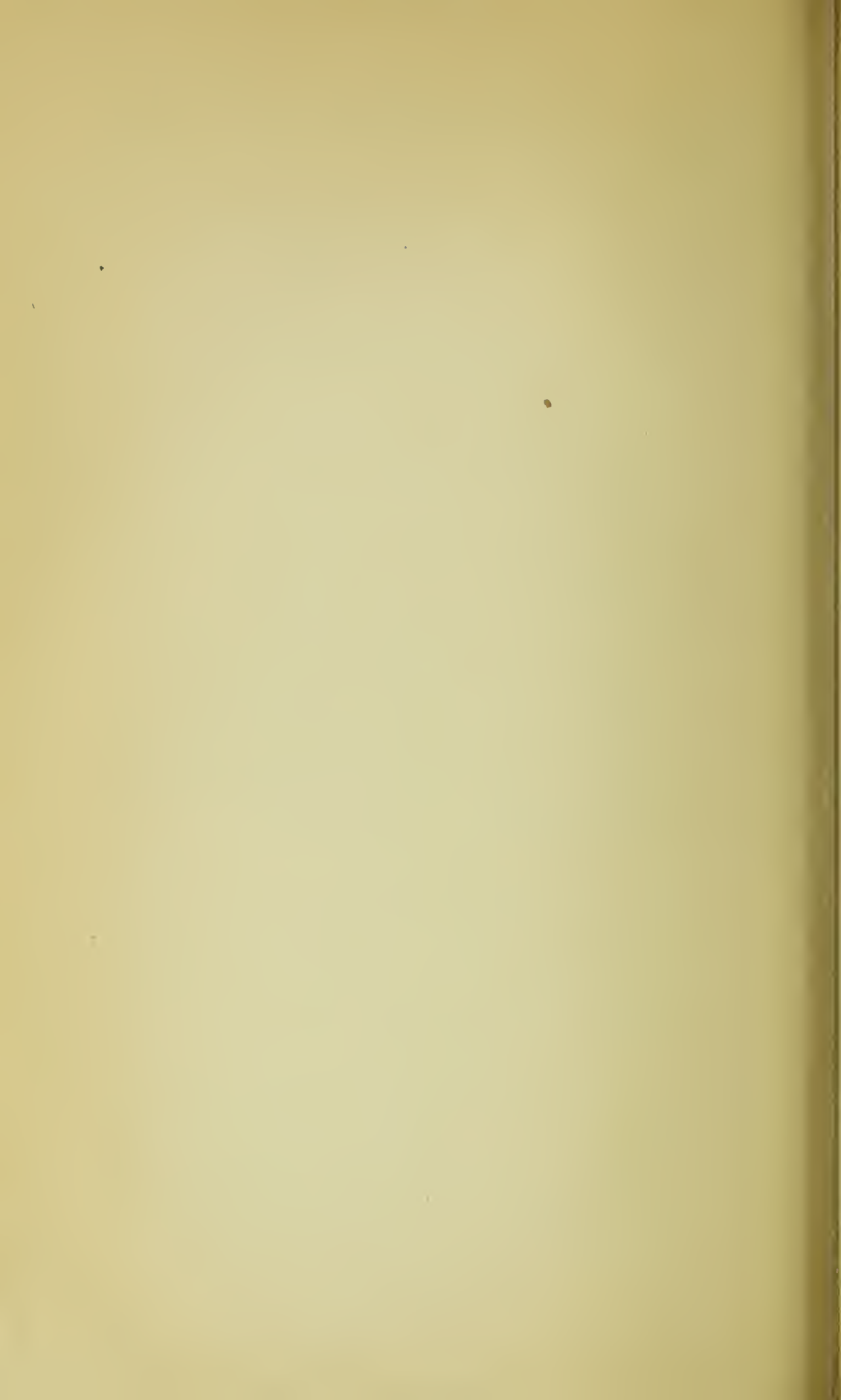
house. Neither have they any love for the divine ignorance and holy darkness of Dionysius. They are eager to catch every ray of knowledge—to know and to rejoice, to the utmost that our mortality may, upon its heavenward pilgrimage.⁵

⁵ Norris says, in his *Hymn to Darkness*—

‘The blest above do thy sweet umbrage prize,
When cloyed with light, they veil their eyes.
The vision of the Deity is made
More sweet and beatific by thy shade.
But we poor tenants of this orb below
Don’t here thy excellencies know,
Till death our understandings does improve,
And then our wiser ghosts thy silent night-walks love.’

In the writings of Henry More we can see, by a notice here and there, how Quakerism looked in the eyes of a retired scholar, by no means indiscriminately adverse to enthusiasm. The word enthusiasm itself, he always uses more in the classical than the modern sense. ‘To tell you my opinion of that sect which are called Quakers, though I must allow that there may be some amongst them good and sincere-hearted men, and it may be nearer to the purity of Christianity for the life and power of it than many others, yet I am well assured that the generality of them are prodigiously melancholy, and some few perhaps possessed with

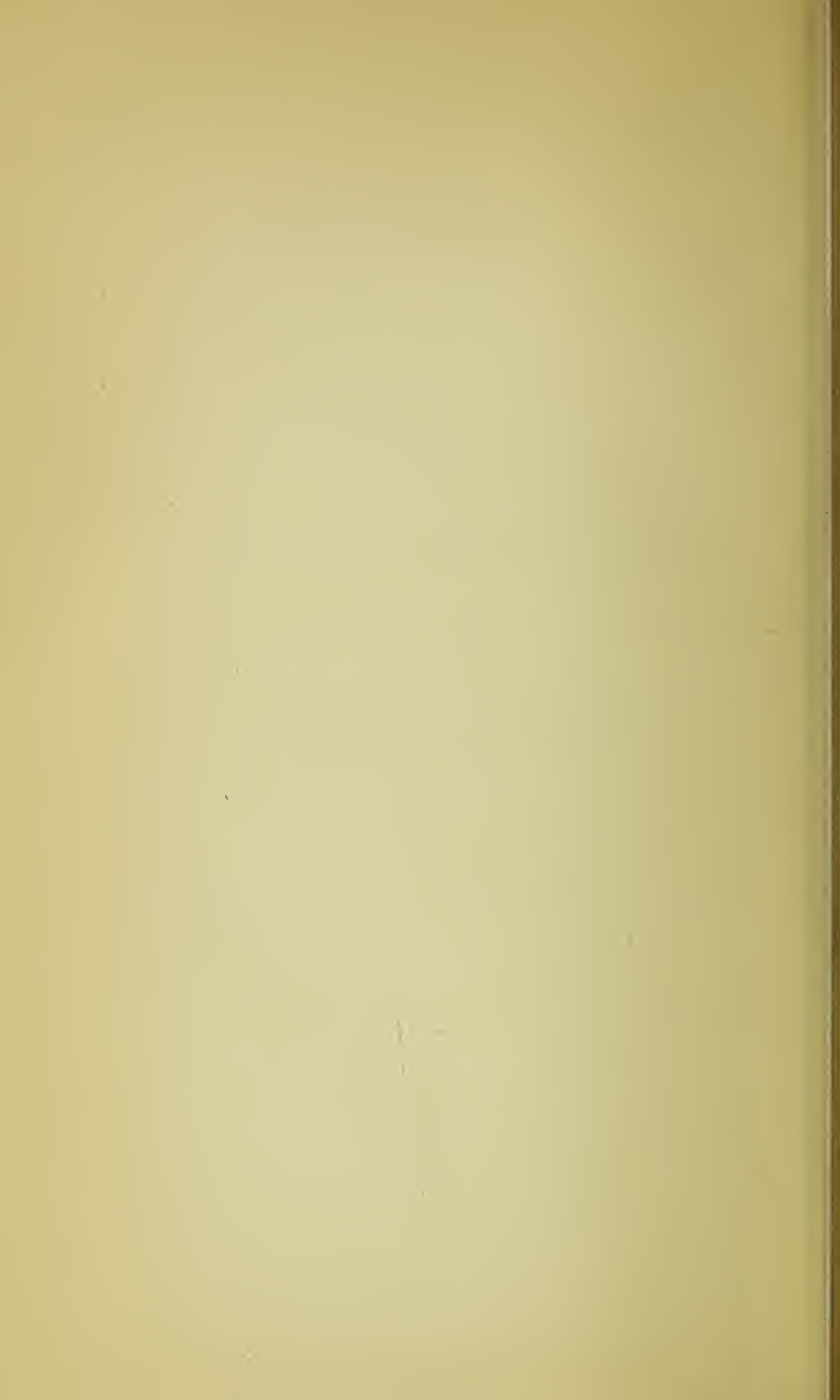
the devil.’ He thinks their doctrine highly dangerous, as mingling with so many good and wholesome things an abominable ‘slighting of the history of Christ, and making a mere allegory of it,—tending to the utter overthrow of that warrantable though more external frame of Christianity which Scripture itself points out to us.’ Yet he takes wise occasion, from the very existence of such a sect, to bid us all look at home, and see that we do not content ourselves with the mere Tabernacle without the Presence and Power of God therein.—*Mastix, his Letter to a Friend*, p. 306.



BOOK THE TWELFTH



EMANUEL SWEDENBORG



CHAPTER I.

What if earth
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought.

MILTON.

HERE follow extracts from a section in Atherton's Notebook, entitled 'Remarks on Swedenborg.'

The doctrine of Correspondence is the central idea of Swedenborg's system. Everything visible has belonging to it an appropriate spiritual reality. The history of man is an acted parable; the universe, a temple covered with hieroglyphics. Behmen, from the light which flashes on certain exalted moments, imagines that he receives the key to these hidden significances,—that he can interpret the *Signatura Rerum*. But he does not see spirits, or talk with angels. According to him, such communications would be less reliable than the intuition he enjoyed. Swedenborg takes opposite ground. 'What I relate,' he would say, 'comes from no such mere inward persuasion. I recount the things I have seen. I do not labour to recall and to express the manifestation made me in some moment of ecstatic exaltation. I write you down a plain statement of journeys and conversations in the spiritual world, which have made the greater part of my daily history for many years together. I take my stand upon experience. I have proceeded by observation and induction as strict as that of any man of science among you. Only it has been given me to enjoy an experience reaching into two worlds—that of spirit, as well as that of matter.'

A mysticism like that of Tauler strives, and strives in vain, to escape all image and 'figuration.' A mysticism like that of

Swedenborg clothes every spiritual truth in some substantial envelope, and discerns a habitant spirit in every variety of form. The follower of Plato essays to rise from the visible to the invisible. But he spurns each ladder in succession by which he has ascended. The follower of Swedenborg seeks a similar ascent; but he never flings away, as common, the husk which guards the precious spiritual kernel. He will not shun the material, or diminish his relations to it. Rather will he surround himself by those objects and those ties of earth which, spiritually regarded, speak constantly of heaven. To look thus on life, I need not enter the school of Swedenborg.

But in this freedom from asceticism,—this tendency to see the spiritual, not beyond, but in, the natural,—the mysticism of Swedenborg, like that of Behmen, has advanced far beyond its mediæval type. Religion no longer plays the despot toward science; the flesh is no longer evil; this beautiful world no longer yielded over to that father of lies who called it his.

As regards the scriptures, I find Swedenborg less one-sided than mystics like Frank, Weigel, or the more extreme among the Quakers. He displays no inclination to depreciate the letter of scripture in favour of the inward teaching of the Word. Without this ‘book-revelation,’ he tell us, man would have remained in gross ignorance concerning his Maker and his future destinies. The literal sense of the word is the basis of the spiritual and celestial sense; and the word, for this very reason, holy in every syllable. He sets up no doctrine based on arbitrary or fantastical interpretations. His doctrinal system is drawn from the literal sense, and calmly, if not always satisfactorily deduced, by citation, exegesis, and comparison of passages, without any mysticism whatever. Thus the balance between the letter and the spirit is maintained in his theology with a fairness almost unparalleled in the history of mysticism.¹

¹ See Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion*, chap. iv.

According to Swedenborg, all the mythology and the symbolisms of ancient times were so many refracted or fragmentary correspondences—relics of that better day when every outward object suggested to man's mind its appropriate divine truth. Such desultory and uncertain links between the seen and the unseen are so many imperfect attempts toward that harmony of the two worlds which he believed himself commissioned to reveal. The happy thoughts of the artist, the imaginative analogies of the poet, are exchanged with Swedenborg for an elaborate system. All the terms and objects in the natural and spiritual worlds are catalogued in pairs. This method appears so much formal pedantry. Our fancies will not work to order. The meaning and the life with which we continually inform outward objects,—those suggestions from sight and sound, which make almost every man at times a poet,—are our own creations, are determined by the mood of the hour, cannot be imposed from without, cannot be arranged like the nomenclature of a science. As regards the inner sense of scripture, at all events, Swedenborg introduces some such yoke. In that province, however, it is perhaps as well that those who are not satisfied with the obvious sense should find some restraint for their imagination, some method for their ingenuity, some guidance in a curiosity irresistible to a certain class of minds. If an objector say, 'I do not see why the ass should correspond to scientific truth, and the horse to intellectual truth,' Swedenborg will reply, 'This analogy rests on no fancy of mine, but on actual experience and observation in the spiritual world. I have always seen horses and asses present and circumstanced, when, and according as, those inward qualities were central.' But I do not believe that it was the design of Swedenborg rigidly to determine the relationships by which men are con-

² See *E. Swedenborg, a Biography*, by J. G. Wilkinson, p. 99; a succinct and well-written account of the man,

and the best introduction to his writings I have met with.

tinually uniting the seen and unseen worlds. He probably conceived it his mission to disclose to men the divinely-ordered correspondences of scripture, the close relationship of man's several states of being, and to make mankind more fully aware that matter and spirit were associated, not only in the varying analogies of imagination, but by the deeper affinity of eternal law. In this way, he sought to impart an impulse rather than to prescribe a scheme. His consistent followers will acknowledge that had he lived in another age, and occupied a different social position, the forms under which the spiritual world presented itself to him would have been different. To a large extent, therefore, his *Memorable Relations* must be regarded as true for him only,—for such a character, in such a day, though containing principles independent of personal peculiarity and local colouring. It would have been indeed inconsistent, had the Protestant who (as himself a Reformer) essayed to supply the defects and correct the errors of the Reformation,—had he designed to prohibit all advance beyond his own position.

There is great depth and beauty in that idea of Dante's, according to which he represents himself as conscious of ascending from heaven to heaven in Paradise, not by perception of a transit through space, but by seeing his Beatrice grow more and more lovely :—

Io non m'accorsi del salire in ella ;
Ma d'esserv' entro mi fece assai fede
La donna mia ch' io vidi far più bella.

What is an imagination with Dante, acquires, in the theology of Swedenborg, the constancy of law. According to him, the more I have of goodness in me, the more shall I discern of the loveliness belonging to the form of a good angel. If I am evil, the hideous forms of evil natures will not be repulsive to me ; and if I were placed in heaven, the glory would afflict me with pain. To three persons, in three different states of holi-

ness and knowledge, a fourth would present three several aspects in the spiritual world. Thus, spirits see as they themselves are ; their character modifies their vision ; their nature creates for them their world. All this seems so much mere idealism, extended from this life into the next. I ask, Where is the absolute truth, then ? My German neighbour quietly inquires, 'Is there, or is there not, any *Ding an sich* ?' The Swedenborgian replies, 'Swedenborg is no idealist, as you suspect. The absolute truth is with God ; and the more goodness and wisdom the creatures have from him, the more truly do they see. The reality external to self, I do not take away ; yea, rather I establish it on a divine basis. For the reality is even this divine order, which the Omniscient hath established and maintains,—that form and vision shall answer exactly to spirit and insight. Such correspondence is but partial in this masquerading world of ours, so full of polite pretences and seemingly forms. But in the spiritual world every one appears by degrees only what he is. He gravitates towards that circle or association of spirits where all see as much as he does. His character is written, past all disguise, in his form ; and so 'the things spoken in the ear in closets are proclaimed upon the housetops.'

Humanity stands high with Behmen, higher yet with Swedenborg. The Divine Humanity is at once the Lord and pattern of all creation. The innumerable worlds of space are arranged after the human form. The universe is a kind of constellation *Homo*. Every spirit belongs to some province in Swedenborg's 'Grand Man,' and affects the correspondent part of the human body. A spirit dwelling in those parts of the universe which answer to the heart or the liver, makes his influx felt in the cardiac or hepatic regions of Swedenborg's frame before he becomes visible to the eye. Evil spirits, again, produced their correspondent maladies on his system, during the time of his intercourse with them. Hypocrites gave him a pain in the

teeth, because hypocrisy is spiritual toothache. The inhabitants of Mercury correspond to a province of memory in the 'grand man : ' the Lunarians to the ensiform cartilage at the bottom of the breast-bone. With Swedenborg likeness is proximity : space and time are states of love and thought. Hence his journeys from world to world ;—passing through states being equivalent to travelling over spaces. Thus it took him ten hours to reach one planet, while at another he arrived in two, because a longer time was required to approximate the state of his mind to that of the inhabitants of the former.³

The thoughts of Swedenborg have never to struggle for expression, like those of the half-educated Behmen. The mind of the Swedish seer was of the methodical and scientific cast. His style is calm and clear. He is easily understood in detail. The metaphors of poets are objects of vision with him : every abstraction takes some concrete form : his illustrations are incessant. He describes with the graphic minuteness of Defoe. Nothing is lost in cloud. With a distinct and steady outline he pourtrays, to the smallest circumstance, the habitations, the amusements, the occupations, the penalties, the economy, the marriages of the unseen world. He is never amazed, he never exaggerates. He is unimpassioned, and wholly careless of effect. Those of his followers with whom I have come in contact, partake of their master's philosophy. They are liberal in spirit, and nowise impatient of unbelief in others. Swedenborg never pants and strives—has none of the tearful vehemence and glowing emotion which choke the utterance of Behmen. He is never familiar in this page, and rhapsodical in that. Always serene, this imperturbable philosopher is the Olympian Jove of mystics. He writes like a man who was sufficient to himself; who could afford to wait. He lived much alone; and strong and deep is the stream of this mysticism which carries no fleck of foam.

³ Wilkinson, pp. 187, 118.

Other mystics seem to know times of wavering, when enthusiasm burns low. To Swedenborg sunrise and sunset are not more constant and familiar than the divine mission which he claims. Other mystics are overpowered by manifestations from the unseen world. Horror seizes them, or a dizzy joy, or the vision leaves them faint and trembling. They have their alternations ; their lights and shadows are in keeping ; they will topple headlong from some sunny pinnacle into an abysmal misery. But Swedenborg is 'in the spirit' for near two score years, and in his easy chair, or at his window, or on his walks, holds converse, as a matter of course, with angels and departed great ones, with patriarchs and devils. He can even instruct some of the angels, who have had experience only of their own world, and are guileless accordingly.

CHAPTER II.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see ;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.

TENNYSON.

I FIND Swedenborg, in the midst of his spiritual interviews and voluminous authorship, taking his part for some time in the Diet of 1761, and presenting three memorials with high repute for practical sagacity. He publishes '*A New Method of finding the Longitude,*' simultaneously with the '*Apocalypse Revealed.*'

He appears to have possessed a remarkable power of inward respiration. He says that he received from the Lord a conformation enabling him to breathe inwardly for a long time, without the aid of the external air, while his outward senses continued their operation.¹

Swedenborg is strongly opposed to ascetic practice in every form. He contradicts all the cloistered contemplative mystics, when he declares that 'man cannot be formed for heaven except by means of the world.' He represents the 'religious,' and devotees who have renounced the world for pious meditation, as by no means agreeable or enviable personages in the other life. They are of a sorrowful temper, despising others, discontented at not having been honoured with superior happi-

¹ Wilkinson, pp. 79, 130.

ness, selfish, turning away from offices of charity (the very means of conjunction with heaven), soon betaking themselves to solitary places. Truly, many of the first in the heaven of the Romish calendar are the last in the heaven of Swedenborg. And I doubt not that his arrangement is, in such cases, the more near the truth of the two. For, as he justly says, 'a life of charity towards our neighbour (which consists in doing what is just and right in every employment) can only be exercised in general as man is engaged in some employment.' Such a life, he declares, tends heavenward,—not so a life of piety without a life of charity.²

'In heaven,' says Swedenborg, 'instruction is committed, not to memory, but to *life* ;—a goodly saying.

Swedenborg's 'Christian Religion' is a system of theology, calm and orderly throughout, illustrated with plates—the *Memorable Relations*. I interpret these marvellous narratives much as Swedenborg does the Mosaic record. I do not question their historic truth, *for Swedenborg*. Such things he saw and heard ; for to such a mind all abstraction takes substantial form. His mental transitions are journeys. Every proposition has its appropriate scenery ; every group of verities incorporates itself in a drama, and becomes a speech and action. But I put an inner sense into these *Relations*, and so reading them, find charming allegories, just in moral and elegant in style.

What Swedenborg tells us about a future state I am certainly not in a position to contradict, for I know nothing about such matters. The general conviction of the Christian world seems to me true in the main,—that the silence of the scriptures concerning such details is an argument for their inspiration—was wisely designed to check curiosity and to exercise faith. Yet it cannot be denied that after all Swedenborg's disclosures, the Christian conflict, and the motives to that holy warfare, remain

² *Heaven and Hell*, § 360.

very much as the Bible presents them. Selfishness is still the root of evil; God the sole foundation of truth and goodness; faith alone, working by love, can overcome the world. If the arrangements he relates as finding place in heaven and hell, be regarded as the unconscious creation of his own brain, an extraordinary genius for legislature must be allowed him by all. There is generally an obvious fitness in the economy he describes. Here and there he is whimsical and Quevedo-like. Sometimes a certain grim satire peeps out. As regards individuals, we suspect prejudice or caprice. He represents Melancthon as faring but poorly, for a long time, in the other world, because he would not let go his doctrine of justification by faith. He elevates Mahomet in his heaven, and lowers Paul. Who does not think of Dante, carrying the feud of Guelph and Ghibelline beyond the grave?³

It shocks such preconceived ideas as we may most of us have formed concerning heaven, to find it represented as so like earth. That in the spiritual world there should be towns and cities, gymnasia and theological discussions, sermons and book-writing, courts of law, and games, yea marriage, of a refined species, the progeny whereof are inward joys and virtues;—all this is novel.⁴ Our notions here are mostly taken from Milton, and his, in considerable measure, from ecclesiastical and scholastic tradition. After the sublimity of the poet, the homely circumstantialities of the theosophist appear cruelly prosaic. Yet Swedenborg's view of the future state may be regarded as, in many respects, a wholesome corrective to the popular conception. The truth, I should dimly surmise, may lie between the two. The general apprehension does perhaps make the transition at death too abrupt; forgets too much the great

³ *True Christian Religion*, § 796.

⁴ See the description of the heavenly palaces, of divine worship in heaven, and of the angelic employments,

Heaven and Hell, §§ 183, 221, 387.

True Christian Religion, §§ 694, 697. Also concerning marriages in heaven, *Heaven and Hell*, §§ 365-386.

variety of degrees and societies of spirits which must distinguish the inhabitants of hell and heaven,—how completely the inward tendency will make the grief or the joy,—how little mere change of scene and mode of existence can constitute the bliss or woe,—and how various must be the occupations and enjoyments of a world which is to consummate, not our adoration merely, but active love and knowledge.

Very beautiful is Swedenborg's description of infants in heaven, and the instruction they receive 'from angels of the female sex, who in the life of the body, loved infants tenderly, and at the same time loved God.'⁵

Even wicked men, immediately after death, are kindly received by good angels—such mercy is there for our poor mortality at the last trying hour. But the evil nature of such persons soon resumes its former ascendancy. The society of those pure associates grows irksome, and is forsaken by the sinful for evil companionship similar to themselves.

Swedenborg cannot be considered mystical in his doctrine concerning spiritual influence—that customary seat of mysticism. Such influence he pronounces immediate on the divine part, but not perceptible on ours, nor such as to exclude the necessity of instruction and the use of means. The good we do, God alone worketh in us; but we are conscious only of effort on our own part, though believing that we receive divine assistance. There is to be no tarrying, he says, for magical grace; no crying 'Wash me!' while the divinely given means of purification lie unused at our side. The *proprium*, or ownhood of every angel, spirit, or man, is only evil. (All angels and devils were once good and bad men.) To live only from God and not from self, is the true purity. Every man is an organ of life, deriving his life and free-will from God, and receptive of the Divine influx—enjoying more or less, as he

⁵ *Heaven and Hell*, §§ 329-345.

opens or closes his nature thereto. If the lower regions of his spiritual nature be closed against this influx, God is still in him, but he is not in God.⁶

Swedenborg declares that the Church has been corrupted by the doctrine of three divine persons existing from eternity. He maintains that such a belief must in reality involve the conception of three several gods, however loudly those who hold it may profess to acknowledge the Divine Unity. In his theology, the Father, Son, and Spirit, are 'the three essentials of one God, which make One, like Soul, Body, and Operation in man.'

The doctrine of Swedenborg concerning the work of Christ appears to have received its peculiar complexion, at least in great measure, from his repugnance to Calvinism. He saw that the theology of the Reformation had unduly elaborated into doctrine, the forensic and pecuniary metaphors of Scripture, concerning justification and redemption. In his reaction, he is too much inclined to give to those figures a meaning considerably short of that which a consistent interpretation must assign them. Yet the results at which he arrives are not so decidedly opposed to those reached by the theology usually termed evangelical, as might have been anticipated. But the process of redemption in Swedenborg's system differs widely. He says he cannot believe that the Father, in his wrath, condemned the human race, and in his mercy sent his Son to bear their curse; that out of love for his suffering Son he cancelled the sentence of damnation, yet only in favour of those for whom the Son should intercede, who was thus to be a perpetual Mediator in the presence of the Father.⁷ He declares it a fundamental error of the Church to believe the passion of

⁶ *True Christian Religion*, chap. vi. 6, 7; *Heaven and Hell*, § 592.

⁷ *True Christian Religion*, chap. ii. 1-7. I give here Swedenborg's idea of the evangelical theology. See espe-

cially §§ 132-135, where he represents himself as correcting the false doctrine of certain spirits in the other world concerning the Divine Nature.

the Cross to be redemption itself. He pronounces imputed righteousness a subversion of the divine order.—So much for what he denies. On the other hand, he affirms that in the fulness of time, Jehovah assumed humanity to redeem and save mankind. Both in the spiritual regions and among men, evil had been gradually outgrowing and threatening to overpower good. The equilibrium between the heavenly and hellish worlds was lost. It was as though a dyke had been broken down, and sin were about to overflow the universe. Then God took to himself our nature, to subjugate the hells and to restore to order the heavens. Every victory gained by Christ over the temptations which assailed Him, distanced and enfeebled the powers of evil everywhere. It was the driving back of ravenous beasts to their dens,—the delivery and feeding of his flock, both men and angels. This victory of the Saviour is our victory, is that redemption in virtue of which we are able, believing in Him, to resist and vanquish evil. Mediation, Intercession, Atonement, Propitiation, are forms of speech ‘expressive of the approach which is opened to God, and of the grace communicated from God, by means of His Humanity.’ Thus Swedenborg also believes in a violated order and an impending perdition; in the redemption of the race from such a fate by the incarnate One; in the vindication or restoration of the divine law and order by his conflict and victory on our behalf; and in a life lived *for* us, which becomes also a life quickened *in* us. He appears to object to the idea of sacrifice as necessarily concentrating the work of redemption in the shedding of the Saviour’s blood. Such may have been the limited conception of sacrifice in the theology he opposed; but that error could be no good reason for explaining away the idea of sacrifice altogether. The language of Christ concerning himself must be strangely misinterpreted if no such idea is to be found there. But that sacrifice was

constituted by his whole life, as well as by its last act—the laying down thereof. The distinction drawn by some divines between the active and passive obedience—as though the death alone were our atonement, and the life alone our example—is a most unhappy refinement.

In Swedenborg's doctrine concerning union with Christ there is nothing mystical. From the passionate and sensuous union of some mystics, and from the pantheistic confusion of others, he is completely free.

It is to be regretted that the work of redemption should still be so partially regarded by opposing sections of the Church. On the one side are those who hold the doctrine of an exact satisfaction (the commercial theory); who suppose that, in virtue of imputed righteousness, God sees in his people no sin; and who would say that men *may*, rather than that they *must*, be exhorted to maintain good works. This covert and generally theoretical antinomianism is happily rare. Yet there are some well-meaning men, desirous of doing a reforming work among us, who actually imagine such an extreme as this to be the ordinary evangelical doctrine. On the other side are those whose tendency is to resolve the historical into the inward Christ. From any such leaning Swedenborg is more free than George Fox. On this side, too, stand those with whom Christ's work is rather a first sample of restored humanity than the way of restoration, and who seem to suppose that in admitting God to be just, they make Him cruel. In this extreme aversion to acknowledge an external law, and an external danger consequent on its violation, Swedenborg does not share. But, like most of the mystics, he conceives of redemption as wrought for us only as it is wrought in us; takes justification for granted, if we have but sanctification; and regards our sins as remitted just in proportion as we are reclaimed from them. If we must lean towards some ex-

treme, this is the more safe, because containing the larger measure of truth. It appears to me that the 'divine order' requires that man be accepted of God in a way consistent with the divine righteousness; and so also as, at the very same time, to become conformed to that righteousness. The sacred writers constantly combine those two aspects of redemption which our systems are so prone to separate. On the one side, Christ's example is pressed upon us, even in those very acts which are peculiar to Himself as divine. On the other, the blood of Christ is represented as sanctifying us—purging our consciences from dead works to serve the living God; while it is also stated expressly that He died, the just for the unjust.

Similar as Swedenborg's theology is in its spirit to that of Behmen, I find him expressly stating that he had never read the German theosophist.

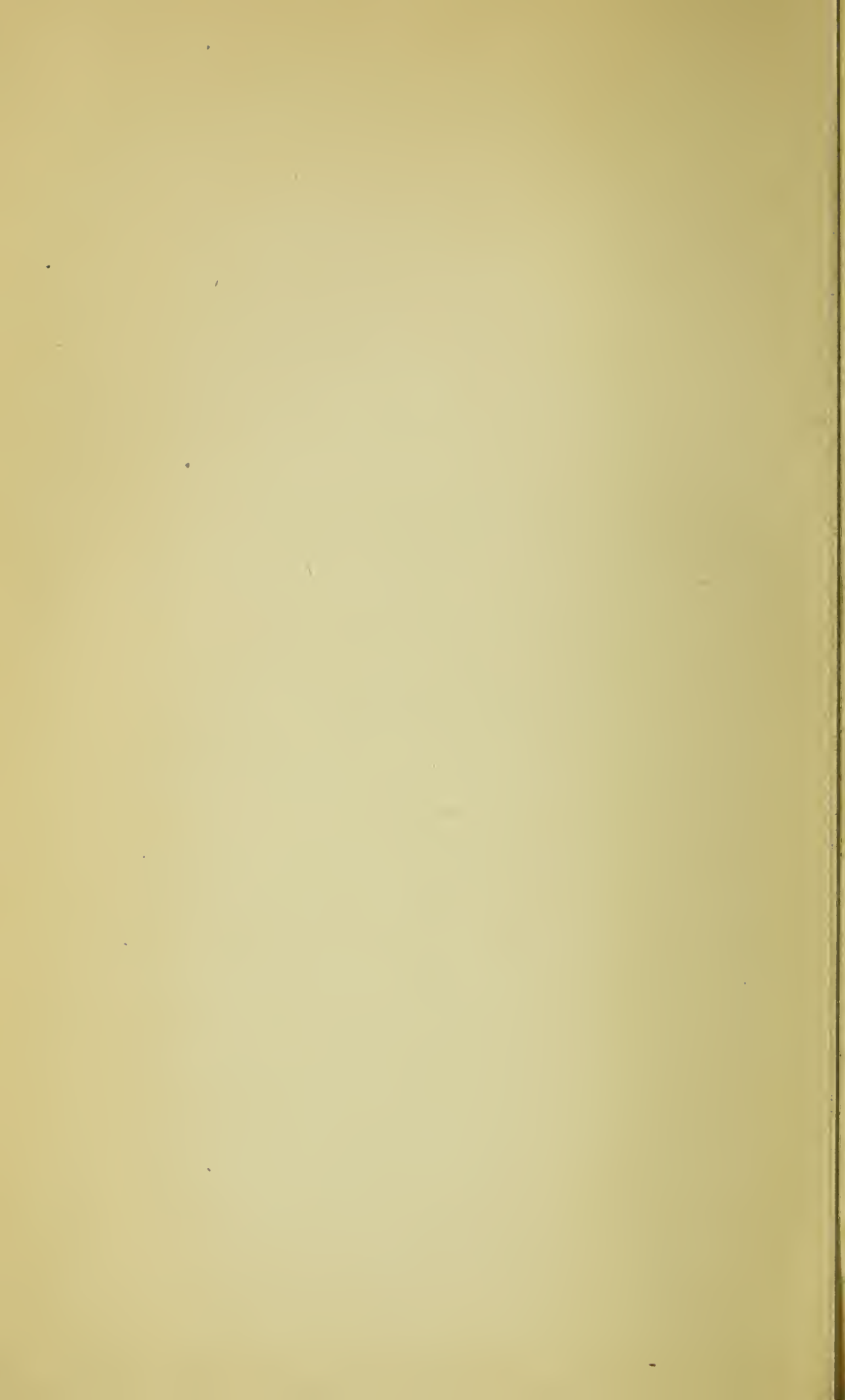
Concerning the Church of the New Jerusalem, Swedenborg says, 'Since the Lord cannot manifest himself in person (to the world), which has just been shown to be impossible, and yet He has foretold that He would come and establish a New Church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He will effect this by the instrumentality of a man, who is able not only to receive the doctrines of that Church in his understanding, but also to make them known by the press. That the Lord manifested Himself before me His servant, that He sent me on this office, and afterwards opened the sight of my spirit, and so let me into the spiritual world, permitting me to see the heavens and the hells, and also to converse with angels and spirits; and this now continually for many years, I attest in truth; and farther, that from the first day of my call to this office, I have never received anything appertaining to the doctrines of that Church from any angel, but from the Lord alone, whilst I was reading the Word.'—*True Christian Religion*, § 779.



BOOK THE THIRTEENTH



CONCLUSION



CHAPTER I.

Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft,
Wie könnten wir zur Sonne blicken ?
Wär nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft,
Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken ?¹
GOETHE.

EARLY in December, Atherton was called away from Ashfield by some matters of business. His solitary evenings were spent in the chief inn of a quiet cathedral town, and solaced by the drawing up of a kind of summary, which was to indicate the main results arrived at by so much reading and talking about the mystics. This final review was despatched in a letter to Gower,—was read aloud by him to a full auditory (comprising, beside its ordinary members, Mr. and Mrs. Lowestoffe, who had come up to spend Christmas),—and is here inserted.

Old Red Dragon, Snorumbury.

MY DEAR GOWER,

I had purposed keeping this concluding paper, which you asked of me, till I could rejoin you once more, and we might read and talk over it together. But I cannot say how long I may be detained here : so I send it you at once, that our mystical inquiries may be wound up before the Christmas merry-makings begin.

In the present day, there are few who will acknowledge the name of mystic. Indeed, Mysticism is now held in combination with so many modifying or even counteracting elements, that a very strongly-marked or extreme expression of it is

¹ Held our eyes no sunny sheen,
How could sunshine e'er be seen ?
Dwelt no power divine within us,
How could God's divineness win us ?

scarcely possible. Yet in many and very diverse forms of religious opinion, a mystical tendency may be discerned. It is apparent in the descendant of Irving, with his supernatural gifts; among some of the followers of Fox, where the inner light eclipses the outer; in the disciple of Swedenborg, so familiar with the world of spirits. The mystical tendency is present, also, wherever the subjective constituent of religion decidedly overbalances the objective. It is to be found wherever the religionist (under whatever pretence) refuses to allow the understanding to judge concerning what falls within its proper province. Thus, I tend toward mysticism, if I invest either my religious intuitions or my particular interpretation of scripture, with a divine halo—with a virtual infallibility—and charge with profanity the man whose understanding is dissatisfied with my conclusions. The ‘evangelical’ is wrong, if he hastily condemns, as ‘carnal,’ him who does not find his express doctrines in the Bible;—if, instead of attempting to satisfy the understanding of the objector with reasons, he summarily dismisses it, by misquoting the passage, ‘the natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit.’ The ‘spiritualist’ errs, in precisely the same way, when he assumes that his intuitions are too holy to be questioned by the logical faculty,—proclaims his religious sentiment above criticism, and pronounces every objection the utterance of a pedantic formalism, or a miserable conventionality. So to do, is to confound the childlike and the childish,—to forget that we should be, in malice, children; but in understanding, men. If the intuition of the one man, or the faith of the other, be removed from the sphere of knowing, and the court of evidence,—be an impulse or an instinct, rather than a conviction, and be rendered inaccessible utterly to the understanding, then is the bridge broken down between them and their fellows. The common tongue of interpretation and the common ground of argument are

taken altogether away. For such faith no reason can be rendered to him who has it not.

In Germany, it may be questioned whether the efforts of the 'faith-philosophers' were not more injurious than helpful to the cause which they espoused. They endeavoured to shelter religion from Rationalism by relegating it to the province of feeling or sentiment. Hamann and Jacobi² might have withstood Rationalism on its own ground. But these defenders abandoned, without a blow, the fortifications of an impregnable argument, and shut themselves up in the citadel—faith. Both were soon eclipsed by the deservedly great name of Schleiermacher. His position was a stronger one than theirs, and more comprehensive; yet, in the issue, scarcely more satisfactory. In Schleiermacher's theology, the individual 'Christian consciousness' is made the test according to which more or less of the recorded history of the Saviour is to be received. The supposed facts of Christianity contract or expand according to the supposed spiritual wants of the individual Christian. Thus, if any say, 'Certain of the miracles, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, do not make a part of my Christian consciousness,—I can realize spiritual communion with Christ, independently of these accessories,'—Schleiermacher tells him he may dispense with believing them. Here, again, too much is conceded: portions of the very heart are set aside as non-essentials. Christianity is a *living* whole, and cannot be thus dismembered without peril to life. This baptism of Schleiermacher is rapid and sweeping, and the veriest sceptics are Christianized in spite of themselves. Men whose Christianity is historic, much as Mahommedanism is historic, turn out excellent Christians, notwithstanding.

Such a theory is, after all, ignoble, because it does not seek

See F. H. Jacobi, *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (1811), where the principles of the

Faith - Philosophy are expounded, though after a desultory, disjointed manner:—more especially pp. 70-93.

Truth alone, at all costs. The first object of religious inquiry is not moral expediency, not edification, not what we may deem productive of the most wholesome impressions, not what we wish to find true; but what *is* true. Let us seek the Truth, and if faithful to what we can find of *that*, these other things will be added to us. Mere good nature is a spurious charity. The cause of religion can never be served by acquiescence in a falsehood. The Christianity offered by Schleiermacher is a glass which mirrors every man—a source of motive, never beyond our own level—a provision which is always what we like and expect. Now, it may so happen that the kind of religion we should like is not that which is the true—not that, therefore, which is good for us. We need a religion adapted to us, but yet high above us, to raise us up. The untrained eye does not at the first view appreciate the old masters of art. If we are sincere in seeking God's truth, we must count on having to receive some things that do not at once commend themselves to our judgment, but into which we shall grow up, in the process of spiritual education. Now, for this kind of self-transcendence Schleiermacher makes no preparation, and his easy entrance does, in reality, preclude progress. We are not surprised to see the Romish priest considering first, not what is truth or fact, but what statement will bring the greatest number within the pale of the Church, what will produce the most edifying impression, what will do least violence to the current preconceptions. The children of the day should disdain the slightest approach to such facile complaisance. If Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity is a lie. On this question no inquiry must be spared—our minds must be thoroughly made up. But to allow the name of Christian to men who do not regard this fact as established, looks as though we were afraid of inquiry,—as politic governments will seem not to see offences which it would be dangerous to punish I

justify my means by my end—I am wanting in truth and manhood, if, having myself rejected some doctrine, I yet appear to hold it, because I think it morally expedient that it should be generally received. I am guilty of a similar pious fraud if I yield up as non-essential some fact on which the Christian faith must hang, in order to recall certain wanderers to the fold of a nominal Christianity. Schleiermacher's sincerity can only be saved at the expense of his judgment. This was the weak point of his accomplished intellect—a weakness shared by many a German divine,—he regarded external facts as of small moment compared with inward feeling. The continual evaporation of outward reality in sentiment is the vitiating principle in his system.³

Side by side with the advocates of faith and feeling in the religious province, appeared German Romanticism in the field of art and literature. The Romanticists were the enthusiastic champions of the Ideal against Realism, the assailants of all artificial method and servile conventionality, the sworn foes everywhere of that low-minded, prosaic narrowness which Germany calls Philistinism.⁴

³ To Schleiermacher the theology of his country owes great and lasting obligation for having led the intellectual promise of his time to a momentous crisis of transition. His genius at once kindled the enthusiasm of youth, and allowed a space to its scepticism. As much opposed as Hamann or Jacobi to the contemptuous Rationalism which then held the scorner's chair, he did not, like them, couch a polemic lance against philosophy. But real and important as was his advance beyond the low and superficial anti-supranaturalism which preceded him, the followers of Schleiermacher found it impossible to rest where he did. From among his pupils have sprung the greatest names in this generation of German divines, and

they have admitted, with scarcely an exception, that he conceded so much for the sake of peace as to render his position untenable. Their master led them to an elevation whence they discerned a farther height and surer resting-place than he attained. For a more detailed account of Schleiermacher and his theological position, the reader is referred to an article by the Author in the *British Quarterly Review* for May, 1849.

⁴ The principles of the genuine Romanticism (as distinguished from its later and degenerate form) are ably enunciated by Tieck, in a comic drama, entitled *Prince Zerbino; or, Travels in Search of Good Taste*. One Nestor, a prosaic pedant, who piques himself on understanding everything,

Schelling gave them a poetical philosophy, and young Schleiermacher's *Discourses on Religion* were, for a time, their Bible. French Encyclopedism and German Rationalism had professed a summary explanation for every mystery, had exiled the supernatural, and ridiculed the Middle Age. In the pages of the *Athenæum* and the *Europa*, Romanticism undertook the defence of mediæval superstition, extolled its fist-law, its wager by battle, its 'earnest' religious wars; and confounding clear thought and definite expression with the pert self-complacence of Rationalism, announced itself enamoured of every mystical obscurity, for the very shadow's sake.

The evils against which the Romanticists contended were many of them real; much they laughed at, well deserving ridicule; but with their truth they mingled a world of fantastic folly. Voltaire was, in many things, as shallow as he was transparent,—*therefore* the muddy obscurity of every visionary who rhapsodized about the All, must be profound as the 'everlasting deeps.' Conventionalism, utilitarianism, logic-grinding, old formulas,—all were to be dethroned by the inspired votaries of intellectual intuition. The most startling extravagance or desperate paradox of opinion was hailed with the loudest

and on his freedom from all enthusiasm and imaginative nonsense, is introduced into the wondrous garden of the Goddess of Poesy. There he sees, among others, Dante and Ariosto, Cervantes and Sophocles. He complains of not finding Hagedorn, Gellert, Gesner, Kleist, or Bodmer; and the Goddess then points him out—as a true German bard—stout old Hans Sachs. Dante appears to him a crusty old fogie; Tasso, a well-meaning man, but weak; and Sophocles, whom he was disposed to respect as a classic, when blamed for the obscurity of his choruses, turns upon him like a bear. The conceited impertinence, the knowing air, and the puzzle-headedness of the Philistine, are hit off to admira-

tion. This Garden of Poesy seems to him a lair of savages, an asylum for lunatics, where all his smug conventionalisms are trampled on, and every canon of his criticism suffers flagrant violation. Genii take him away, and give him something substantial to eat—earth to earth. The tables and chairs begin to talk to him. They congratulate themselves on being delivered from their old free life in the woods, and cut out into *useful* articles of furniture, so fulfilling the purpose of their being. He gets on much better with them than with the poets, and thinks them (himself excepted) the most sensible creatures in the world.

plaudits, as most surely fraught with the divine afflatus. The Romanticists essayed to harmonize the ideal and the real. For the most part, they succeeded only in confounding their spheres; and ending by absorbing the real in the ideal. In their hands, philosophy became imaginative and rhetorical,—a very garden of gay fancies; while poetry grew metaphysical and analytic. Where they should have created, they dissect; where they should have inquired, they imagine.⁵

It is a cardinal doctrine with Romanticism that the common should be regarded as the wondrous, and the wondrous as the common. The land of faëry is to be our beaten business track; its dreamy speech, a household language; its spirit-glances, our familiar looks. At the same time, the objects and appliances of everyday existence are to be informed with supernatural significance, and animated with a mysterious life. So, in *Sartor Resartus* (a book which is simply the Evangel of Romanticism, in its more vigorous form), Mr. Carlyle reminds the reader that his 'daily life is girt with Wonder,' and that his 'very blankets and breeches are Miracles.' Thus our life is to be at once a trophy and a bazaar; like old Westminster Hall, where the upper story was gorgeous with blazonry and proud with the ensigns of chivalrous romance, and the ground-floor laid out in shops.

Ere long, Romanticists like Creuzer and Görres, began to resolve the old mythologies into allegorical science: while Romanticists like Frederick Schlegel, were resolving religion into poetry, and morality into æsthetics. Dante and Tasso, Camoens and Goethe, had intermingled classic and romantic myths, as a poetic decoration, or a fanciful experiment. With the Romanticists (so frequently mastered by their own materials), such admixture became actual earnest. They announced the

⁵ See Julian Schmidt, *Geschichte der Deutschen National Literatur im 19^{ten} Jahrhundert*, th. i. c. vi.

approach of a new Religion of Humanity and Art. They summoned flower-spirits from the Ganges, braceleted crocodiles from the Nile, monstrous forms from the Talmud and the Koran, to fill its incongruous pantheon of symbols. The novel wonders of animal magnetism were to constitute its miracles. Thus, like Proclus, they could make philosophy superstitious, they could not make superstition philosophical. They attempted the construction of a true and universal religion, by heaping together the products of every recorded religious falsity, and bowing at all shrines in turn. Like Iamblichus, they sought in theurgy for a sign; and in their credulous incredulity, grew greedy of every supranaturalism except the scriptural. In a moment of especial inspiration, Frederick Schlegel, writing in the *Athenæum*, declared that the only opposition which the new religion of philanthropy and good taste was likely to encounter, would spring from the few Christians proper still in existence; but even they, when the Aurora actually shone, would fling aside their prejudice, fall down, and worship.⁶

Such anticipations appear ridiculous enough. But against ridicule, to which they were peculiarly sensitive, the Roman-ticists possessed a ready safeguard. This resource consisted in their doctrine of Irony. After advancing a paradox, or pushing a fancy to the edge of absurdity, let the author turn round, and abandon his own creation; or dissipate it, with a serene smile; or assuming another tone, look down upon it, as questionable, from some new and superior height. Thus, if any dullard begins gravely to criticise, he shall have only laughter for his pains, as one too gross for the perception of humour; while at the same time, the reader is given to understand that beneath that jest there *does* lie, nevertheless, a kernel of most earnest and momentous truth. According to the Ironical theory, such saying and unsaying is not convenient merely (as a secret door

⁶ Schmidt, p. 60.

of escape behind the tapestry), but in the highest degree artistic. For what is Art, but a sublime play? Does not loftiest genius ever sport, godlike, with its material, remote and riddling to the lower apprehension of common minds? In *Sartor Resartus* the English public have been familiarized with this ingenious device. After professing to translate, from the paper-bags of Teufelsdröckh, some ultra-transcendental sally, Mr. Carlyle makes a practice of addressing the reader, admits that he may well feel weary and perplexed, confesses that he himself does not always see his way in these 'strange utterances,' calls them a farrago whose meaning must be mainly conjectured, and finally leaves it pleasantly uncertain how much is delirium, how much inspiration.

But no artifice could save Romanticism, in the hands of its most extravagant representatives, from the condign catastrophe. This sensuous æsthetic religion, this effeminate symbolism, with its gallery of arbitrary and incongruous types from the dreams of all time,—this worship of Art as Deity, could tend but in one direction. The men who began with sentimental admiration for the Church of Rome, ended by passing their necks beneath her yoke; and the artist terminates miserably in the bigot. They had contemned the Reformation, on æsthetic grounds, as unromantic: they came to dread it on superstitious grounds as unsafe. Romanticism, so sanguine and so venturous in its revolutionary youth, grew anile in its premature decrepitude; mumbled its *credos*; cursed its heretics—and died.

It was at the opening of the present century that the great rush to Rome took place: a significant lesson, indicating the constant issue of that subjective poetical religionism which divorces Truth from Beauty, which craves religious fancies and neglects religious facts, till it falls a victim to the greatest religious fallacy. Then was celebrated the perversion of Frederick Schlegel, of Adam Müller, of Zachariah Werner—'a

born mystic,' as Carlyle rightly styles him. Tieck, who must stand acquitted of the follies of the school ; and August Wilhelm Schlegel (despite some crotchets, immeasurably superior to Frederick) retained their Protestantism.

Novalis, for by this name Friedrich von Hardenberg is most known, is perhaps as fair a representative of Romanticism as can be found. He had no occasion, like some of the party, to affect, as so much art, the language of the mystics whom he studied with such devotion. Novalis was to the manner born. To none was the realm of reverie and fable—visited by most of us only at intervals—more completely a familiar, daily dwelling-place. Scarcely to the morbid phantasy of Hoffmann was the ordinary life more visibly inwrought with the mysterious. Poetry was his practical staff of every-day existence ; and practical life, to him, all poetry. The creations of his fancy were his Holy Writ ; and Holy Writ the most divine creation of the fancy. Werner regretted that men should ever have employed two distinct terms to designate Art and Religion. With Novalis they are perfectly identical. It is his wont to deal with spiritual truth by analogies drawn from physics, and to investigate physics by his mystical axioms concerning spiritual truth. A mind so desultory and discursive was quite unequal to the formation of a system. But to what sort of system such a confusion of thought must lead, if ever methodically elaborated, has not patient, hard-working Jacob Behmen already shown us ? Where other men are satisfied with tracing a resemblance, Novalis announces an identity. What others use as an illustration, he will obey as a principle. With him, as with the old theosophists, the laws of the universe are the imaginative analogies which link together all its regions, seen and unseen,—analogies bred in his own heated brain.

Thus, according to Novalis, he is the true Archimage of Idealism, 'who can transform external things into thoughts, and

thoughts into external things.' 'The poet,' he says, 'is the true enchanter : by identifying himself with an object he compels it to become what he will.' 'Experience is magical, and only magically explicable.' 'Physics is the theory of imagination.' 'Religion, Love, Nature, Politics, all must be treated mystically.' On such a principle alone can we account for the ultra-Neoplatonist rodomontade he utters in praise of mathematics. He declares the genuine mathematician the enthusiast *par excellence*—mathematics is the life of the gods—it is religion—it is virtual omniscience. Mathematical books are to be read devoutly, as the word of God.⁷

The suggestive and sparkling aphorisms of Novalis should be read with due allowance. Some contain admirable thoughts, pointedly expressed ; others are curiously perverse or puerile. Now they breathe the lofty stoical spirit we find in Schleiermacher's monologues. Presently, Fichte seems forgotten ; the strain of Titanic self-assertion is relaxed, and Novalis languidly reclines with the Lotos-eaters among the flowers. In one page life is but 'a battle and a march,' in another, the soul's activity is an eating poison ; love, a sickness ; life, the disease of the spirit—a brief fever, to be soothed by the slumber of mystical repose, and healed at last by healthful, restful death. In this latter mood he woos the sleepy abstraction of the oriental mysticism. Action is morbid, in his eyes ; to dream is to overcome. All activity ceases, he says, when Knowledge enters. The condition of Knowledge is Eudæmonia—saintly calm of contemplation.⁸ Such is the aspiration dimly discernible through the florid obscurity of his *Hymns to Night*. Shutting out the garish outer world of the Actual, forgetting all its tinsel glories and its petty pains, the enthusiast seems to rise into that mystic meditative Night, whose darkness reveals more

⁷ Novalis, *Schriften*, th. ii. pp. 152, 159, 221.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

truth than the searching brightness of the daylight, and in whose recesses his transported spirit celebrates its bridal with the Queen of Heaven—the æsthetic Mary, the Eternal Beauty.

Now that the assailants of Revelation have grown so extremely pious, we find them zealously enlisting certain modifications of mysticism on their side. Modern spiritualism revives the tactics of ancient philosophy. It borrows from Christianity (as did Porphyry) a higher moral tone than it could otherwise have reached, and then pretends to look down upon the ethics of the scriptures. The religious sentiment so variously evolved in every age and country, is brought forth to overwhelm the religious truth revealed in Christ. A philosophic church is set up. The hope full of immortality is depreciated as low and selfish. Quietism abased itself so profoundly that it would scarcely lift its eyes toward that hope. Spiritualism exalts itself so ambitiously, that it will not stoop to make that hope its own. In the seventeenth century, mysticism was in sad earnest on this question of disinterestedness : in the nineteenth, such indifference is the pretence of a preposterous self-sufficiency.

But the device which failed so signally, some fourteen centuries ago, cannot now prevail, though the hostile approach is more artfully contrived. That antichristian sentimentalism which is too refined for the medium of a book, and for the morality of the Bible, was discomfited as soon as seen, and received its *coup de grace* from the '*Eclipse of Faith*,' amidst universal laughter. But this repetition of old ideas is, after all, the most mortifying and damnatory fact. To think that the advocates of a philosophic religious sentiment, in opposition to the old Book, should exhibit as little novelty as their enemies, —that even after throwing off the Biblical fetters, no progress should be visible,—that the haunting Past should be with them still,—that after making their escape from antiquated Paul and

John, they should find themselves in company with antiquated Proclus and Plotinus !

The theosophy of Swedenborg was original. Mysticism has produced nothing really new in that direction since his day, and the northern seer still walks alone within his circle. Franz Baader re-clothes the bones of Behmen's system from the materials of modern science ; and Oetinger, a student both of Behmen and of Swedenborg, attempts to arrange a divine system of science by the mystical interpretation of scripture. Even the 'holy vegetation' of oriental mysticism has been reproduced. Schelling bids man know God 'in silent not-knowing,' as the plant reveals eternal beauty in ' stillest existence and without reflection.' Such counsel means much more than the maxim, 'Il ne faut pas voyager pour voir, mais pour ne pas voir,' so frequent with John of the Cross and Fénelon. Laurence Oken, a physiologist of note and a disciple of Schelling, sees in the snail an exalted symbol of mind slumbering deeply within itself. He beholds in that creature an impersonation of majestic wisdom : it is 'the prophesying goddess sitting on the tripod.' What reflection, what earnestness, what timidity, what confidence ! The same Oken travesties Behmen, when he makes red = fire, love, Father ; blue = air, truth, belief, Son ; green = water, formation, hope, Ghost ; yellow = earth, Satan. He imagined that he wrote his Physio-philosophy in a kind of inspiration. Here, again, we see that this intellectual intuition, professedly so keen, so spontaneous, so free from every formula, does yet continually repeat itself.

Great and various have been the services rendered by mysticism throughout the history of the Christian Church. It has exposed pretence. It has demanded thoroughness. It has sought, amidst surrounding formalism, what was deemed the highest form of spirituality. Its strain has been sometimes of a mood so high as to 'create a soul within the ribs of death.'

But it has been influential for good in proportion to its temperance in the doctrine concerning the outward rule and the inner light. Wherever it has been extravagant in this respect—has thrown off common sense or decency—been turbulent, licentious, or ‘high fantastical,’ there good men and thoughtful have stood mournfully aloof from it, while formal men or designing have made its follies a plea for tightening the cords of spiritual oppression. It has won acceptance from men when it has been sufficiently moderate to urge intelligible arguments, and to appeal sincerely (if not always warrantably) to that outward Revelation which is commonly received. But the world has rarely been disposed to receive boastful professions of spirituality or freedom, vague declamation and rhapsodical denunciation of reason or the schools, in the place of those definite expressions of opinion which, though sometimes narrow, are at least readily apprehensible. Incalculable must be the advantage of any man or party who can manifest a clear meaning over those who cannot.

There is danger in the present day, lest in the reaction against logical formalism and prescription, an extravagant value should be set on faith for its own sake. The Romanist makes mere faith, blind and implicit, a saving virtue. The spiritualist falls into the same error when he says, ‘Only be in earnest—get faith in an idea—in something, at any rate—and all will be well.’ But faith is a principle, not an instinct. Among the many claimants for my belief, I must make an intelligent choice. It is of some consequence whether the ‘idea’ on which I am mounted be false or true. It can be good for no man to be recklessly earnest in the devil’s work.

Mysticism has generally apprehended religion rather on its divine than on its human side. It makes haste to lose humanity, and to be glorified. Grievous afflictions have reminded some of the mystical aspirants that they were human still. The

spiritual pride of others has betrayed them, first to ostentatious sanctity, and then to shameful sin. Among those who would surpass humanity, some have fallen disgracefully, others ludicrously, below it. There have been those whose transformation proved to be downward to a lower sphere, not upward to an element more rare. They fare like Lucius in the *Golden Ass* to whom Fotis has given the wrong witch-salve. He extends his arms, he sways himself to and fro, he expects the next moment to find himself changing into a bird. But his hands and feet grow horny, his thickening, irritated skin shoots forth hairs, and behold him metamorphosed into an ass. The theatrical devotion, so frequent among the ornaments of Roman saintship, overlooks common duties, sometimes despises necessary helps, generally mistakes altogether the nature of true greatness. The Christianity exhibited in the New Testament differs most conspicuously from the Mystical Theology in being so much more human. It addresses man as he is; it addresses all; it appeals to the whole nature of every man. It knows nothing of class-religion. It does not bid men exhaust themselves in efforts to live only in the *apex* of their being—that *ἄνθος νόου* of which Plotinus speaks.

The history of mysticism shows us, farther, that the attempt to escape all figure or symbol, in our apprehensions of divine truth, is useless, or worse than useless. Such endeavour commonly ends in substituting for a figure which, though limited and partial, has life and heart in it, some vague abstraction, cold and lifeless,—and itself, perhaps, ultimately a figure, after all. It is one thing to remember that language is *but* language,—that behind all the expressions of love or power lies an infinity that cannot be expressed. It is another to leave behind (as many mystics have striven to do) even the vital breathing metaphors of Holy Writ, and restlessly to peer beyond, into the Unutterable—the Illimitable. Surely the words ‘King,’

‘Shepherd,’ ‘Father,’ express more truth concerning God than the ‘pure Act’ of philosophy. When I speak of God as near or distant, pleased or displeased, the change may be in me rather than in Him. But in practical result—in the effects I feel—it is to me *as though* such change of disposition were real. And mysticism must freely grant me this, if it would not play into the hands of scholasticism, its hereditary foe. There is a sickly dread of anthropomorphism abroad among us, which is afraid of attributing to God a heart.

Mysticism has often spoken out bravely and well against those who substitute barren propositions for religious life,—who reject the kindly truth to make a tyrant of some rigid theory or system. But there is danger also on the other side. An imaginative, brainsick man, may substitute religious vagaries, whims, conceits, for religious truth. Men may be led as far astray by mere feeling as by mere logic. While the man of method makes an idol of his theory, the enthusiast may make an idol of his passion or his fancy. To this latter snare we have seen mysticism repeatedly fall a prey. The fanatic and the formalist both essay to build a temple to the Holy Spirit. The formalist is satisfied with raising the structure; and a sorry taper, here and there, makes darkness visible. The fanatic kindles so many lights, and with so little care, that he burns his edifice to the ground, as did the Florentines their Church of the San Spirito, from excessive illumination.

Anatomists tell us of what they term vicarious secretion in the bodies of men. One organ is found, in some cases of injury, to produce the secretion proper to another; and so we survive the hurt. I think some process of the kind must supervene for the benefit of our minds. With many of the mystics, I doubt not, the heart performed, in their spiritual œconomy, the functions of the head. A careful scrutiny of the mystical theology will show, I am confident, that several of its

prominent doctrines are, in fact, most valuable correctives, and probably took or maintained their place as such. These doctrines, some of which by no means commend themselves to the non-mystical mind, are the preservatives of the mystic from his peculiar dangers. Mysticism leads to an excessive and morbid introspection. How necessary, then, that doctrine of ‘unconsciousness’ reiterated by John of the Cross and Fénelon,—itself an extreme, but indispensable to counteract its opposite. Mysticism has taught many to expect a perceptible inward guidance. How necessary, then, the doctrine of ‘quiet,’—that the soul should be abstracted in a profound stillness, lest the hasty impulses of self should be mistaken for a divine monition. Mysticism exalts the soul to a fervour and a vision, fraught with strange sweetnesses and glories. How necessary, then, that doctrine of the more elevated Quietism which bids the mystic pass beyond the sensible enjoyments and imaginative delights of religion—escape from the finer senses of the soul, as well as the grosser senses of the body, into that state of pure and imageless contemplation which has no preference or conception of its own. If Quietism is not to become a fantastic selfishness, a sensuous effeminacy, a voice must cry, ‘Haste through the picture-gallery—haste through the rose-garden—dare the darkness, wherein the glory hides!’

The lawless excesses of which mysticism has been occasionally guilty should not serve to commend spiritual despotism. The stock alternative with the Church of Rome has been—‘Accept these fanatical outbreaks as divine, or submit to our rule.’ Unfortunately for this very palpable sophism, the most monstrous mystical extravagance, whether of pantheism, theurgy, or miracle, is to be found in the Romish Church. Angelus Silesius, Angela de Foligni, and Christina Mirabilis, are nowhere surpassed in their respective extremes. The best of the Romish mystics are questionable Romanists. Tauler and Madame

Guyon were more Protestant than they were aware. Even the submissive Fénélon is but a half-hearted son of the Church, beside that most genuine type of her saintship—the zealous Dominic. Innocent folk are sometimes inclined to think better of a system which could produce a man like Fénélon. They forget that, as a product of the system, Fénélon was a very inferior specimen—little better than a failure.

There is a considerable class, in these restless, hurrying, striving days, who would be much the better for a measure of spiritual infusion from the Quietism of Madame Guyon. She has found an excellent expositor and advocate in Mr. Upham. The want of leisure, the necessity for utmost exertion, to which most of us are subject, tends to make us too anxious about trifles, presumptuously eager and impatient. We should thank the teacher who aids us to resign ourselves, to be nothing, to wait, to trust. But it is to be feared that such lessons will have the greatest charm for those who need them least—for pensive, retiring contemplatists, who ought rather to be driven out to action and to usefulness. There is a danger lest passivity should be carried too far—almost as though man were the helpless object about which light and darkness were contending, rather than himself a combatant, armed by God against the powers of night. It seems to me, too, better to watch against, and suppress as they arise, our selfish tendencies and tempers—our envy, pride, indifference, hate, covetousness—than to be always nervously trying (as Fénélon does) to catch that Proteus, SELF, in the abstract.

Finally, in the mischievous or unsuccessful forms of mysticism we have the recorded result of a series of attempts to substitute the inner light for the outer. When mysticism threw off external authority altogether, it went mad—as we have seen in the revolutionary pantheism of the Middle Age. When it incorporated itself more and more in revealed truth, it became

a benign power—as on the eve of the Reformation. The testimony of history, then, is repeatedly and decisively uttered against those who imagine that to set aside the authority of Scripture would be to promote the religious life of men. The Divine Spirit is with us yet; and the healing, elevating wisdom of the inspired page unexhausted still. The hope of our age lies, not in a conceited defiance of controul, but in our ability more fully to apprehend the counsels God Himself has given us. Argument may be evaded. To speak in the name of religion may seem to beg the question. But to resist the verdict of the past is not the part of any thoughtful man. He who hopes to succeed in superseding letter by spirit—in disseminating a gospel more spiritual than that of scripture, by somehow dispensing with the vehicle which all truth requires for its conveyance,—who hopes to succeed in any attempt approaching this, where more powerful minds, sometimes more favourably situated, have met only with defeat—such a fanatic must be dismissed with pity as totally incurable.

It grows late. Good night all. If I can get back earlier I will.

Yours,

HENRY ATHERTON.

CHAPTER II.

La raison, dit saint Augustin, ne se soumettroit jamais, si elle ne jugeoit qu'il y a des occasions où elle doit se soumettre. Il est donc juste qu'elle se soumette quand elle juge qu'elle doit se soumettre ; et qu'elle ne se soumette pas, quand elle juge avec fondement qu'elle ne doit pas le faire : mais il faut prendre garde à ne pas se tromper.—PASCAL.

GOWER ceased reading. A few irregular remarks and questions followed the short silence. Willoughby expressed his wish that Atherton were with them, and was echoed by the lady of Ashfield. Kate received Atherton's bulky letter from Gower's hands, and began to look it over for herself, as we always do with newspapers, however fully read aloud. Mrs. Lowestoffe was cutting out some ingenious paper figures, destined to throw little Kate into rapturous glee, and her husband had just petitioned for music, when the deep bark of Lion was heard in the court-yard ; then the muffled sound of hoofs and wheels over the snow, and a tearing peal of the bell.

It was Atherton, who, released sooner than he had hoped, had followed his epistle at speed, sweeping with the wind, through the whitening hills, for two-thirds of the December day.

In half an hour he was among his guests—had refreshed him after his journey—been upstairs to kiss his sleeping child—and now appeared, blithesome and ruddy, diffusing smiles. Enthroned in his favourite arm-chair, he amused them with the story of what he had seen, and heard, and done ; nothing uncommon, certainly, but full of life and humour in his style of telling. On his way home that day he had met with an enter-

taining companion in the railway carriage, a little spherical old gentleman, exhibiting between upper and nether masses of fur a narrow segment of face,—gruff and abrupt in speech—ferocious about stoppages and windows,—who had been in India, and knew everybody who was ‘anybody’ there.

‘We talked,’ said Atherton, ‘about Brahmins and Buddhists, about the Bhilsa Topes and Major Cunningham, about the civil service, and what not. On every topic he was surprisingly well informed, and gave me, in his brief way, just the facts I wanted to know. A propos of Ceylon and the famous cinnamon breezes, he said that when he was on board the Bungagunga Indiaman, they stood one day out at sea, some miles off the island, when the wind was blowing, mark you, right *on* the land. A group among the passengers began to dispute about these said breezes—were they a poetic fiction, or an olfactory fact? With that, my old gentleman slips away slyly, rubs a little oil of cinnamon on the weather hammock nettings, and has the satisfaction of presently seeing the pro-cinnamon party in full triumph, crying, with distended nostrils and exultant sniffs, ‘There ! don’t you smell them now?’ One of them, he told me (his multitudinous envelopes shaking the while), actually published an account when he got home, relating his own experience of those spicy gales, said to perfume the ocean air so far away.’

GOWER. Amusing enough. Just the blunder, by the way, of our mystics,—mistaking what exists only on board their own personality for something real that operates from without. Their pleasurable emotions can be nothing less than precious odours—miraculous benisons, breathed from some island of the blest.

LOWESTOFFE. They seem to me a most monotonous set of gentry—those same mystics. Accept my congratulations on your having nearly done with them. As far as I understand

them, they go round one old circuit for ever, in varying forms,—just like your gold fish there, Mrs. Atherton, now looking so big about it, and the next moment tapered off to a mere tail. See that fellow now, magnified almost to the size of his glass world, with his huge eyes, like a cabbage rose in spectacles ; and now, gone again on his way round and round,—always the same, after all.

ATHERTON. And yet religious extravagances, with all their inordinate Quixotism, or worse, are full of instruction. Your favourite botanical books should hint that much to you ; for the vegetable physiologists all say that no little light has been thrown on the regularly developed organism by the study of monstrous and aberrant forms of growth.

LOWESTOFFE. There is something in that. But these irregularities you speak of have repeatedly broken out in the conduct, have they not, as well as in imagination or opinion ?

ATHERTON. They have. The dazzling splendour of a superhuman knowledge or a superhuman fervour, has often distorted the common rule of right and wrong,—

GOWER. As they say the Northern Lights disturb the direction of the needle.

KATE. Yet those glimmers and flashes are of service in the arctic night,—better than total darkness.

LOWESTOFFE. Right, Miss Merivale. I fully admit the plea.

WILLOUGHBY. I think we must allow the substantial justice of Mr. Lowestoffe's complaint. There is a sameness in these mystics. Each one starts, to so large an extent, on his own account, with the same bias and the same materials. He reiterates, after his manner, the same protest, and the same exaggeration. The same negations, the same incoherence, the same metaphors, have attempted in every age the utterance of the unutterable.

ATHERTON. So science began to make steady progress as soon as it confined itself within the limits of the knowable, and ceased to publish fancy maps of the *terra incognita*. Theosophy was perpetually transgressing those limits, and hence its waste of ingenuity in vain gyrations.

GOWER. There is one point, Atherton, on which I could wish you had dwelt more at large in your letter. Do we not find the most prolific source of mysticism in the idea that there is a special faculty for the discernment of spiritual truth,—that there is a kind of soul within the soul which may unite with God, leaving behind it all the ordinary powers of the mind,—a potency, in fact, altogether independent of knowledge, understanding, judgment, imagination, &c., and never amenable to any of them? We have encountered this doctrine over and over again, sometimes in a qualified, sometimes in an uncontrollable form. Hugo's 'Eye of Contemplation' is such a faculty. Tauler adopts the principle when he separates the Ground of the Soul from all its acts and powers. It lies at the root of the inexpressible experiences so precious to the Spanish mystics, when every function of the soul underwent divine suspension. It appears again in the divorce declared (by Coleridge, for example) between the Understanding—the reasoning faculty, which deliberates and judges, and the Intuitive Reason, which discerns religious and philosophic truth directly.

ATHERTON. You make out a strong case, certainly. Declare intuition absolute, with an undivided irresponsible prerogative of this kind, and what check is provided against any possible vagary of mysticism?

MRS. ATHERTON. I do not clearly understand the question at issue. Pray explain before you go farther.

GOWER. Allow me to make the attempt. I am afraid we are growing prosy—speaking for myself, at least. Old travellers used to report that the Danube, near its conjunction with the

Drave, flowed in a stream quite separate from its tributary, though the same banks confined them both. The two currents were said to be perfectly distinct in colour, and their waters of quality so opposite, that the fish caught in the one were never to be found in the other. Now the question is, whether Reason and Understanding in the mind of man, do, in a similar way, reciprocally exclude each other.

ATHERTON. Gower says no ; and the failures of mysticism powerfully support his position. I agree with him. I think we have all within us what I may call Intuition, the poetical, and Understanding, the practical man ; but that each of the two is the better for close fellowship with his brother. Let not Intuition disdain common-sense, and think irrationality a sign of genius. And you, Gower, would be the last to give the reins to logic only, and live by expediency, arithmetic, and mensuration.

MRS. ATHERTON. Thank you.

WILLOUGHBY. But there was occasion, surely, for Coleridge's exhortation to rise above the dividual particular notions we have gathered about us, to the higher region of the Universal Reason.

ATHERTON. By all means, let us clear our minds of prejudice, and seek the True for its own sake.

LOWESTOFFE. But I do not find that those who profess to have ascended to the common ground of Universal Reason, are one whit more agreed among themselves, than those who are disputing in the lists of logic about evidence.

WILLOUGHBY. They are not, I grant. They would attribute their want of unanimity, however, to the fact that some of them have not sufficiently purged their intuitional eyesight from everything personal and particular.

LOWESTOFFE. Who is to be judge in the matter ? Who will say how much purging will suffice to assure a man that he

has nowhere mistaken a 'wholesome Prejudice' for a divine intuition?

WILLOUGHBY. He must exercise his judgment——

GOWER. Exactly so; his critical, sifting faculty—his understanding. But that is contrary to the theory in question, which represents Understanding as utterly incapable in the Intuitional sphere. According to Jacobi, it is the instinct of the logical faculty to contradict the intuitional—as the bat repudiates the sunshine.

ATHERTON. If the Christianity of mere logic hardens into a formula, the Christianity of mere intuition evaporates in a phantom.

WILLOUGHBY. But do not let us forget how limited is the logical faculty.

GOWER. So, for that matter, is the intuitional. Undeveloped by culture from without, its voice is incoherent, various, scarce audible oftentimes.

WILLOUGHBY. What logic can prove to me the Eternity of the Divine Nature? Is not that a transcendental truth?

ATHERTON. I grant it. But my understanding, observing and reasoning, has shown me convincingly that I must receive that truth on pain of believing an absurdity. In this way, the Understanding is satisfied (as Pascal observes it always should be), and acquiesces in a truth beyond itself. But if I have not thus used my Understanding as far as it will go, I am traversing the transcendental region without the passport it should give me,—I cannot render a reason—I only oracularly affirm—I am fast turning mystic.

LOWESTOFFE. But how this Intuition sees to work, or finds means to work, without contact with the other faculties of the mind, I cannot conceive. Has it a set of finer senses of its own? Has no one ever defined it?

GOWER. Several definitions have been attempted. I think

Mark Antony's the best. He delivered it when he gave drunken Lepidus that hoaxing description of the crocodile. A mind with any depth of insight will understand at once the fine symbolism of Shakspeare, and see that he is depicting Intuition. 'It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth; it is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs; it lives by that which nourishes it; and, the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.'

ATHERTON. In fact, Intuition is not to be termed one among or above the faculties of the mind. It is rather, like consciousness, related to them as species to individuals. As the man is, so are his intuitions. Previous observation, training, judgment, all combine to bring the mind to that point from which Intuition takes its survey, more or less extended.

LOWESTOFFE. Good. Our inner and our outer world contradict that separatist theory every day, by their action and reaction on each other. The man who dreads the internal light as an illusive Will-o'-the-Wisp, has often consulted his own inward bent, far more than he supposes, in choosing what authority he shall receive. The man who professes to transcend the external altogether is still moulded by it in a thousand unimagined modes.

WILLOUGHBY. The imperfect character of our recollection should make us very cautious, I admit. So much that has been imported into the mind looks native and spontaneous after a lapse of time. Many an idea, promulged as the dictum of Intuition—as having its source in the immemorial depths of our being, has been subsequently traced, even by its own author, to the external world.

GOWER. That gaberlunzie, Memory (whose wallet has so many holes), would step in oftener, if he did his duty, and say, like Edie Ochiltree, 'I mind the biggin o' it.'

ATHERTON. It seems to me so unfair and ungrateful that,

after having been so largely indebted, from the first, to the outer world, any man should pretend, at a certain point, to deny utterly that indispensable coadjutor in his inward development.

GOWER. You remind me of the affectation of the author in *Humphrey Clinker*, who professed such an antipathy to green fields as made him careful to sit with his back to the window all dinner-time,—though he had, in fact, passed his childhood with the asses on the village common.

LOWESTOFFE. Let us, then, celebrate the reconciliation of the pair—Reason and Understanding, if the terms are to be retained. So only can our nature realize its full productiveness,—as the richest mines lie always near the junction of two dissimilar rocks.

ATHERTON. I think spiritualism, which complains that religion is separated too widely from common life, will scarcely mend the matter by teaching men that they use one faculty, or set of faculties, about their week-day business, and a quite distinct one in their worship.

GOWER. As though we were to leave our understandings—like the sandals of old—at the door of our holy places.

ATHERTON. Enough on this question, I have only one remark to add. We have seen mysticism endeavouring to exclude all distinct form or expression, all vivid figure, from its apprehensions of spiritual truth; as if such clearness and warmth belonged to our meaner nature—were low and sensuous.

GOWER. Confounding spirituality with abstraction.

ATHERTON. Spiritualism now repeats the same error—is the revival of an old mistake in a new form. It shrinks from distinctness, mistaking it, I suppose, for so much gross materialism, or artificial formalism. It shuns, as far as possible, actual outward persons and events—as though reality were carnality—as

though the fewer facts we acknowledged, the less formal we were sure to be—as though we were spiritual in proportion as we resolved sacred narrative into symbols of inward states or emotions, forsook history for reverie, and evidence for hazy sentiment. The Spanish Quietists were well nigh enjoining the exclusion of the conception of Christ's humanity from their higher contemplation, as an image too substantial and earthy. Spiritualism, in its tendency to escape from objective facts to subjective experience, displays a similarly unnatural timidity—a morbid aversion to that manly exercise of our whole nature on religious questions which we put forth on others.

GOWER. Thinking, I conclude, that the opposite to spirituality is, not sensuality or earthliness—but external reality.

WILLOUGHBY. Why look at me? You don't suppose I have a word to say in defence of such a curious confusion of thought?

LOWESTOFFE (*who has been turning over the leaves of a Shakspeare while listening.*) If any one of you should ever take it into his head to write a book about mysticism——

ATHERTON. Forbid it, my good genius!

LOWESTOFFE. I have a motto for him—a motto by 'sweet Bully Bottom,' quite in the past-all-utterance mystical strain.

'I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream—past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was, there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had. But man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen; man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom.'

CHAPTER III.

What pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghostlike form,
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever?

BROWNING.

THESE lines hovered in Gower's memory that night, as he walked home after the conversation just recorded. He thought how applicable they were to asceticism,—especially to that intense asceticism of the mind which, not content with wasting the body and searing the sense, prides itself on starving Reason and blinding Imagination,—which eschews all form and figure, and affects naked truth, without a medium or an envelope. His was a nature which saw everything in figure. His mind moved everywhere among pictures. For him to dispense with metaphor and parable—with significant raiment and dramatic action for his ideas, would have been almost equivalent to dispensing with ideas altogether. So he quickened his steps; for the starless, unfeatured night seemed to him too much to resemble the blank and bleak Abstraction of the severer mystics,—that tyrannous curfew of warm natural life and of all bright thoughts.

He soon reached his abode, where a blithe fire awaited him, radiating its almost animated welcome over easel, busts, and books. Assuming light study vesture, he leaned back in his arm-chair, enjoying slippered ease. He would not light his lamp, but reclining in the very mood for reverie, watched the fire—now the undisputed magician of his studio,—as it called up or dismissed, with its waving flame, the distorted shadows

of familiar things on wall and ceiling. He himself was soon occupied in like manner, waywardly calling forth, linking, severing, a company of shadows out of the past.

In a half-waking, half-dreaming twilight, Gower seemed to see the dusky form of the Indian, crouched on his mat beside a holy river, awaiting divine insensibility. There was the Yogi, gathered up in his patch of shade, like an insect rolled under a leaf; while, above, the beating sun-glare trampled over the plains, strewn with his reflected rays, as over an immeasurable threshing-floor.

Then he dreamed that he stood in a Persian garden, and before him were creeping plants, trained on wires slanting upward to a point, and in and out and up and down this flower-minster, hung with bells, darted those flying jewels, the humming-birds: the sun's rays as they slanted on their glancing coats seemed to dash off in a spray of rainbow colours. Some pierced the nectaries of the flowers with their fine bills; others soared upward, and as they were lost in the dazzling air, the roses swung their censers, and the nightingales sang an assumption-hymn for them. Yet this scene changed incessantly. Every now and then the pinnacle of flowers assumed giant size,—was a needle of rock, shooting up out of a chasm of hanging vegetation; and innumerable spirits—winged souls of Sufis, were striving to reach the silent glistening peak. There was a flutter and a pulsing in the sky—as with summer lightning at night,—and the palpitation of some vast eyelid made light and darkness succeed each other with quick throbs. Now it was the pyramid of flowers, now the star-crowned point of rock. So time and space were surpassed—sported with. Instants were ages, he thought, and cycles ran their round in a moment. The vault of heaven was now a hanging flower-cup; and presently the feather of a humming-bird expanded to a sunset of far-streaming gold and purple.

A leaping fame caused these alternations in Dreamland, as it lit or left in shadow his closed eyes.

Then he stood on the desolate Campagna, where before him stretched the ruins of the Roman aqueducts. The broken arches, dotting at intervals the far waste of withered green, drew no more water from the hills for the million-mouthed City in the horizon. Their furrowed, beaten age held in its wrinkles only roots of maidenhair, and sometimes little rain-pools along the crevices,—the scornful charity of any passing shower. In a moment the wilderness grew populous with the sound of voices and the clangour of tools. A swarm of workmen, clustered about the broken links of the chain, were striving to piece them together again—to bind up the mighty artery, and set it flowing as of old. But an insatiable morass sucked down the stones they brought. Waggon full of gods (such as moved in the old triumphs), of statues monstrous, bestial, many-limbed, from all the temples of the nations, were unladen, with sacrifice and augury, and the idols deposited on the treacherous quagmire, only to sink down, a drowning mass, with bowing heads and vainly-lifted arms. Then the whole undulating plain appeared to roll up in vapour, and a wind, carrying in it a sound of psalms, and driving before it a snowy foam of acacia blossoms, swept clear the field of vision. No ; the old influence was to flow no more from the Olympian Houses above that blue line of hills. Great Pan was dead. The broken cisterns would hold no water.

He stood next before the mouth of a cavern, partly overhung with a drooping hair of tropical plants. At his side was a nun, who changed, as is the wont of dreams, into a variety of persons. At one time, she was St. Theresa, then Christina Mirabilis, and presently Gower thought he recognised Theresa once more. He followed his conductress into the cavern, in the gloom of which a hermit rivulet was pattering along, telling

its pebble beads. As they passed on, the night-birds in the black recesses of the rock shrieked and hooted at them. As he touched the dank sides of the passage, from time to time his hand would rest on some loathly wet lump, shuffling into a cranny, or some nameless gelid shape fell asunder at his touch, opening gashes in itself where lay, in rows, seeds of great tarantula eye-balls, that ran away dissolved in venomous rheum. Bat-like things flapped down from funnel-shaped holes : polypi felt after his face with slimy fingers : crabs, with puffed human faces, slid under his tread ; and skinny creatures, as it were featherless birds, with faces like a horse's skull, leaned over and whinnied at him. 'These,' said Theresa, 'are the obscene hell-brood whose temptations make so terrible the entrance on the Higher Life.'

The long cavern had not yet made a single winding, and he turned, as the darkness increased, to have a last look at the entrance, whence the outer sunshine still twinkled after them. He could see a green hill that faced the mouth, lying off like a bright transparency. Or was it a spot brought into the disc of his great rock-telescope, from some planet of perpetual summer—one of those that play in the hair of the sun? Christina, impatient of this sinful looking back, urged him onward. A palm-branch she carried grew luminous, and its plume of flame dropping sparks, became their torch. She paused to point out to him some plants growing in a black mould. Birds had carried in thus far the seeds from which they sprang ; but there had been no sun-light to give them colour, and their form was uncertain and defectively developed. 'Behold,' said she, 'these saintly flowers. Mark that holy pallor ! The sun never stained their pureness with those gaudy hues men admire. Yon garish world can show no such perfectness : see them, they are hueless, scentless, well-nigh formless !' 'Sickly, blanched abortions !' exclaimed the dreamer, so loudly that he almost

awoke. 'We want more life, not less—fuller—sunnier!' Christina crossed herself piously to hear abstraction thus blasphemed. And now the passage, widening, opened on the central hall of rock, that branched out into depths of darkness every way, and was fretted with gleaming stalactites. There were amber volutes and brittle clusters of tawny bubbles; lily-bells of stone, flowers with sparry thorns and twining stream-like stems; creamy falls from slabs of enamel, motionless, yet seeming ever to drop from ledge to ledge; membranous curtains, and net-work, and traceries; tissues and lawn-like folds of delicate marble; while in the centre, reaching to the misty summit of the dome, stood a huge sheaf of pillars, like alabaster organ-pipes. A solemn music trembled and swelled, and as its rising volume shook the air, voices sang—'Weep for the sins of men!' There was a wild burst of sound; then sudden silence; and, above and around, nothing was audible but a universal trickling and running, a dripping and dropping and plashing, while the palm-torch flashed on innumerable tear-drops, hanging on every pendant point and jutting ledge, or sliding down the glistening rock.

After a while, it seemed to be Theresa who spoke to him and said, 'Here in these depths is warmth, when the world above is locked in ice; and when the surface is parched, here dwells chaste coolness, safe encelled. Our fire seems numbness to a blinded world; and we are frost to its dog-day rages.' With that a spell seemed to come over her hearer. The spirit of the words became his spirit. The fate of an empire seemed as nothing in his eyes beside his next prospect of rapture, or his success in straining out another half-pint of tears. In a moment he was turned to stone. He had become a gargoyle high up on Strasburg Cathedral, and was spouting water from his lolling tongue at the circling birds.

Gower next found himself, on a cold grey morning in spring,

in a vine country, where men and women were toiling up the steep hills on either side a river, carrying baskets of earth. Last winter's rain had swept away the thin soil to the bone, and they must lay a new one about their vine-sticks. In the midst of their miserable labour, these poor people saw standing among them a majestic stranger, wrapped in a robe. Gower thought he recognised Swedenborg at once. 'Stay,' cried the seer, 'God hath made a soil already for you. Build no other. Your own stony hearts have made the hill seem to you as iron.' They heard : each seemed to take a stone out of his bosom, and hurl it down the steep ; when straightway every foot sank deep into a rich and kindly earth, and a shout of joy broke forth, echoed far among the cloudy gorges.

Once more Gower thought he stood upon the shoulder of a volcano, among the clinking scorix. It was growing dark. A strange shape of fire was suddenly at his side, helmed with a flaring cresset, under the light of which the rocky projections around glowed like the burnished beaks of galleys. Over his shoulders hung a mantle of azure flame, fringed with sparks and tasselled with brushes of fire. On his breast was what seemed a hauberk of some emerald incandescence, that brightened or paled with every sinuous motion of the lithe frame, as when the wind comes and goes about an ignited tree-trunk in a burning forest. The form said—'I am the Flame-king : behold a vision of my works'—and passed his hand before the eyes of the dreamer. Gower saw columns of steam shot up from an Indian sea, with stones and mire, under a great canopy of smoke. Then all was calm : a new island had been born ; and the waves licked the black fire-cub. Next he saw a burning mountain, lighting, at the dead of night, glaciers and snowy precipices—as the fire-cross of a great festival lights the shafts and arches of some darkened cathedral. Avalanches fell, looking, under the glare, like sliding continents of ruby, and

were shut down in their chasm-caskets with a noise of thunder. He beheld the burning of brave palaces, of captured cities, of prairies where the fire hunts alone, and the earth shakes with the trample of a myriad hoofs flying from the destroyer.

Then he stood on the mountain side, as before ; but it was broad day, and beneath him lay in the sun a sky-like bay, white houses, and the parti-coloured fields under the haze, like a gay escutcheon, half-hidden by a gauzy housing. Beside him, in place of the Flame-king, stood a shining One fantastically clad in whatsoever the sunshine loves best to inform and turn to glory. The mantle slanting from his shoulders shone like a waterfall which runs gold with sunlight ; his breast mirrored a sunset ; and translucent forest-leaves were woven for his tunic. His cheek glowed, delicate as the finely-cut camelia, held against the sun. ‘ I am King Sunlight,’ he said. ‘ Mine is the even kindliness of the summer-time. I make ready harvest-home and vintage. I triumph in the green-meshed tropic forests, with their fern-floors, and garland-galleried tree-tops, where stand the great trunks which, interlaced with their thick twining underwood, are set like fishers’ stakes with their nets, in those aerial tides of heavy fragrance. There I make all things green threaten to shoot faster than the cumbered river can run through the wilds of verdure. I drive Winter away, as though I were his shepherd, and he leaves fragments of his fleece in snow-patches among the hills, when I pursue him. I love no flaming ascents, no tossing meteoric splendours. I overgrow the strife-scars and fire-rents, which my Titan brother makes, with peace-breathing green. I urge thee to no glittering leap against the rapids of thy natural mortal element. With my shining in thy heart, thou shalt have peace, whether thine outward life raise or sink thee,—as he who rows in the glory-wake under a sunrise, is bright and golden whether on the crest of the wave or in the hollow. I put courage into the

heart of the Lady in *Comus*, when alone in the haunted wood. —A quite true story, by the way,' continued the Phantom, with a sudden familiarity, 'for those of you mortals who can receive it. Wilt thou come with me, and work humbly at what lies next thy hand, or wait to surpass humanity, or go travelling to find Michael's sword to clear thy land withal? With my shining in thy heart, every flinty obstacle shall furnish thee with new fire; and in thine affliction I will bring thee from every blasted pine an Ariel swift to do thee service: so shall thy troubles be thy ministers. Shall it be the splendour, or the inward sunshine?'

As Gower turned from the approaching Flame-king, he clasped the hand of Sunlight with such vehemence that he awoke.

It was one o'clock. He hastened to bed, and there slept soundly: I am sure he had dreamed more than enough for one night.

From the very church-tower which struck one that winter morning, the ensuing spring heard a merry peal of bells,—such a rocking and a ringing as never since has shaken those old stones. I daresay Willoughby would tell you that the bells made so merry because he had just finished his romance. Don't believe him: suspect rather, with your usual sagacity, that Lionel Gower and Kate Merivale had something to do with it.

INDEX.

A BELARD, i. 142, 149.
 Absorption, Mystical, i. 86.
 Abstraction, Doctrine of Hugo concerning, i. 157; of Ruysbroek, 328; of the Quietists, ii. 172; not to be mistaken for spirituality, 365.
 Adolf Arnstein, his Chronicle, i. 181, 213, 243, 319, 340.
 Affliginiensis, John, i. 334.
 Agrippa, Cornelius, i. 44; ii. 61; his *Vanity of Arts and Sciences*, 62; his doctrine of the Microcosm, 65.
 Alcantara, Peter of, ii. 157, 221.
 Alchemy in the sixteenth century, ii. 58; Theological, 77.
 Alexandria, Rise of its Philosophic School, i. 66, 74; Fusion of Religions there, 72; Eclecticism, 75; its Mysticism revived at Florence, ii. 147.
 Algazzali, ii. 5.
 Alvarez, Balthazar, ii. 171.
 Amalric of Bena, i. 131.
 Ammonius Saccas, his Eclecticism, i. 74.
 Anabaptists of Munster, ii. 37.
 Andreä, Valentine, ii. 132.
 Angela de Foligni, i. 362.
 Angelus Silesius, ii. 5; his Pantheism, 6; his Extravagance of Negation, 18; Analogies with Emerson, 22.
 Anselm, i. 141, 149.
 Antony, St., i. 109.
 Apathy, i. 58; styled Poverty of Spirit, 331.
 Apollonius of Tyana, i. 71.
 Aquinas, Thomas, his Classification of Virtues, i. 123.
 Areopagita, Dionysius, see Dionysius.
 Aristotle, Mischievous Influence of his Ethics, i. 120.

Asceticism, Oriental, i. 56; of Plotinus, 71; of Neo-Platonism, 76; of the Fathers of the Desert, 109; mistakes the Design of Christianity, 143; its services to Priestcraft, 365; of the Friends, ii. 309; discouraged by the Mysticism of Swedenborg, 328.
 Astras, Indian, ii. 143.
 Athos, Mount, Monks of, i. 355.
 Atonement, Swedenborg's doctrine of, ii. 332.
 Augustine, i. 131, 146.
 Aurora of Behmen, ii. 97.

B AADER, Franz, ii. 351.
 Bagvat-Gita, i. 51.
 Barclay, his *Apology*, ii. 300.
 Beghards, i. 184.
 Behmen, Jacob, i. 39; his early life, ii. 80; his illumination, 83, 93, 95; his *Aurora*, 86; his debt to predecessors, 90; his style, 99; genial and manly character of his Mysticism, 102; his Fountain-Spirits, 104, 120; his Theory of Contraries, 109; his doctrine of the Fall, 115; estimate of his position, 118; compared with Swedenborg, 326.
 Bernard, his personal appearance, i. 134; life at Clairvaux, 135; moderation of his Mysticism, 136; character and extent of his influence, 140; undue limitation of Reason in his Theology, 141; definition of Faith, 142; doctrine concerning Contemplation, 143; concerning Disinterested Love, 144; definition of Union, 144; Sermons on Canticles, 145; his mystical Interpretation, 145.

Berulle, Cardinal, defends St. Francis de Sales, ii. 281.
 Black Death, in the fourteenth century, i. 313.
 Blossius, Ludovic, passage from his *Institutio spiritualis*, i. 24; ii. 281.
 Bokelson, John, ii. 38.
 Bona, Cardinal, i. 24; ii. 178.
 Bonaventura, i. 149, 154.
 Bossuet, his ignorance of Mysticism, ii. 252, *note*; appointed to the Commission of Inquiry concerning Mme. Guyon, 255; prejudices the cause of Mme. Guyon, 256, *note*; his treatment of Fénelon, 257; his panegyric on the Spanish Mystics, 259; his *Instructions on the States of Prayer*, 261; his jealousy of Fénelon, 264; his treachery, 268; his *Account of Quietism*, 268; his hypocrisy, 270, *note*; his misrepresentations, 278.
 Bourignon, Antoinette, ii. 286, 289.
 Brigitta, St., i. 361.
 Buddhism, its Mysticism, i. 56; its Monasticism, 56.
 Bustami, ii. 11.

CABASILAS, Archbishop of Thessalonica, i. 356.
 Cabbala, ii. 55, 142.
 Cagliostro, ii. 130.
 Callenberg, Lady Clara von, ii. 293; her death, 295.
 Canticles, Bernard's Sermons on the, i. 145.
 Carlstadt, ii. 43; opposed by Luther, 51.
Carmel, Mount, the Ascent of, by John of the Cross, ii. 185, 192.
 Catherine of Siena, i. 364; ii. 171.
 Cevennes, Protestants of the, ii. 313.
 Christina Ebner, of Engelthal, i. 223.
 Christina Mirabilis, ii. 221.
City of God, Mystical, of Maria d'Agreda, ii. 164.
 Clairvaux, Monastery of, described, i. 132.
 Coleridge, i. 87; Analogies of Plotinus with, 87; his intuitive reason, 88.
 Contemplation, doctrine of Philo concerning, i. 66; of Bernard, 143; of

Hugo, 156; Richard's six stages of, 162; the 'indistinct' of St. Frances de Sales, ii. 179; of Fénelon, 280.
 Contraries, Behmen's Theory of, ii. 109.
 Cornelius Agrippa, see Agrippa.
 Correspondences, Swedenborg's doctrine of, ii. 321.
 Counter-Reformation, ii. 149; character of its Mysticism, 151.
 Cross, John of the, see John.
 Cyr, St., ii. 248.

DAVID of Dinant, i. 131.
 Denys, St., of France, identified with the Pseudo-Dionysius, i. 120.
 Descartes, i. 43.
 Desert, Fathers of the, i. 109.
 Desmarets, de St. Sorlin, ii. 244.
 D'Etrées, ii. 243.
 Dionysius Areopagita, first appearance of the writings under that name, i. 111; Theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, 113-115, 278; influence of his Mysticism on the Middle Ages, 119; in the East and in the West contrasted, 130; identified with St. Denys of France, 120; followed by Molinos, ii. 171; by John of the Cross, 185.
 Dionysius the Carthusian, his definition of mystical theology, i. 24; ii. 281.
 Dippel, ii. 125.
 Director, the Spiritual, ii. 158.
 Dominic of Jesu Maria, his miraculous elevation, ii. 176.
 Dominicans, Reformatory Preachers among the, i. 224.

EBNER, Christina, of Engelthal, i. 223; Margaret, 216.
 Eckart, his preaching, i. 188, 193; compared with Tauler, 192, 254, 282, 302; his story of the beggar, 197; probable motive of his heresy, 204; analogies with Hegel, 206, 212; sources of his Pantheism, 210, 282; compared with Fichte, 212; two classes of followers, 330, *note*.

Eclecticism, Alexandrian, i. 74.
 Ecstasy, doctrine of Plotinus concerning, i. 77, 78; of Porphyry, 97; of Iamblichus, 104; of Richard of St. Victor, 163; described by Said, ii. 19; Theresa's prayer of, 169; corporeal effects of, 169; the 'ecstatic life' of Francis de Sales, 176.
 Edwards, President, i. 169.
 Egotheism, i. 331.
 Emanation, Neo-Platonist doctrine of, i. 80; in the theology of Dionysius, 113; in the teaching of Eckart, 278; in the Persian Mysticism, ii. 23.
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo, i. 306; ii. 8; analogies with Angelus Silesius and the Sufis, 9, 20, 22; his doctrine of Intuition, 18.
 Endern, Karl von, ii. 98.
 Engelbrecht, ii. 125.
 England, Mysticism in, ii. 301.
 English Platonists, see Platonism.
 Erigena, John Scotus, i. 131, 146, 279; ii. 110, 113.
 Ethics, of Aristotle, i. 121; of Monasticism, 122.

F AITH, how defined by Bernard, i. 142; justification by, ii. 31; to what extent apprehended by the Mystics, 31; to be distinguished from sanctification, 35; Paracelsian doctrine of, 73, 90, 144; how opposed to Sight, 240; Error of Spiritualism concerning, 352.
 Faith-Philosophy in Germany, ii. 341.
 Fénelon, ii. 173; his first interview with Mme. Guyon, 250; signs the Articles of Issy, 258; his Quietism, 258; difficulties of his position, 263; his *Maxims of the Saints*, 263; appeals to Rome, 265; his friends disgraced, 268; his reply to Bossuet's *Account of Quietism*, 270; his submission, 272.
 Feridoddin Attar, ii. 21.
 Fichte, his Idealism compared with that of the East, i. 60; his definition of a Mystic, 60; compared with Eckart, 212.
 Fléggellants, i. 316.
 Florence, Revival of Neo-Platonism in, ii. 149.

Foligni, Angela de, i. 362.
 Fountain-Spirits of Behmen, ii. 104, 120.
 Fox, George, his early history, ii. 303; his narrowness and his benevolence, 304; his asceticism, 309; principal defect of his Theology, 313.
 Francis, St., de Sales, ii. 152; his 'indistinct contemplation,' 179; his *Introduction à la Vie Dévote*, 246, note.
 Francis, St., of Assisi, ii. 171.
 Franciscans, Millenarian, i. 185.
 Frank, Sebastian, ii. 47.
 Fratricelli, i. 184.
 Free Spirit, Brethren of the, i. 184.
 Friends, Journal of the Early, ii. 305.
 Friends of God, i. 224.

G ABALIS, Comte de, ii. 138.
 Gamahea, ii. 75, 77.
 Gassner, ii. 130.
 Gelenius, Victor, his Mystical Degrees, ii. 177.
 Gematria, ii. 141, note.
 Gerlacus, Petrus, i. 367, note.
 Germain, Count St., ii. 130.
 Gerson, Chancellor, charges Ruysbroek with Pantheism, i. 338; his Mystical Theology, 369.
 Gichtel, i. 38; ii. 123, 125.
 Gnomes, ii. 139.
 God, distinguished from Godhead, by Eckart, i. 190; Friends of, 224.
 Godet des Marias, ii. 252.
 Greek Church, Mysticism in, i. 109; stereotyped character of its Theology, 122.
 Groot, Gerard, i. 334, note.
 Guru, i. 59.
 Guthmann, ii. 125.
 Guyon, Madame, early religious life, ii. 207; spiritual desertion, 222; self-loss in God, 227; Prayer of Silence, 233; compared with St. Theresa, 234; her activity, 235; her *Torrents*, 236, note; persecution, 237; first interview with Fénelon, 250; her doctrine at St. Cyr, 253; Bossuet's conduct to her, 255; Flight from Meaux, and imprisonment, 260; at Vaugirard, 263; in the Bastille, 272; dies at Blois, 272.

HAMANN, ii. 341.

Hardenberg, Friedrich von, see Novalis.

Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, ii. 246.

Harphius, ii. 177, 282.

Heaven, described by Swedenborg, ii. 330.

Hegel, analogies with Eckart, i. 206, 212; opinion of Eckart, 206.

Heresies, Mystical, in the fourteenth century, i. 201, 209, 257, 329.

Hermann of Fritzlar, i. 181; his *Heiligenleben*, 181, *note*.

Hesychasts, i. 355.

Hierarchies, of Iamblichus, i. 101; of Proclus, 105; of Dionysius, 114; Hugo's Commentary on, 155.

Hildegard, Abbess, i. 146; ii. 219.

Hinduism, its Mysticism, i. 55.

Hugo of St. Victor, character of his Mysticism, i. 154; his Commentary on the Hierarchies of Dionysius, 155; defines Meditation, 155; his Eye of Contemplation, 158; defines Abstraction, 158.

IAMBLICHUS, his Theurgy, i. 100; his Hierarchies, 101; his twofold life of the Soul, 102; his doctrine concerning Ecstasy, 104; his mistakes repeated by Romanticism, ii. 346.

Ida of Louvain, ii. 218.

Ida of Nivelles, ii. 220.

Identity, Schelling's Philosophy of, i. 44.

Illuminati, ii. 136, 281.

Imitatio Christi, The, i. 367.

India, Pantheism of, i. 55.

Indifference, Eckart's Doctrine of, i. 188, 194; of Quietism, ii. 205, 239.

Intelligence, use of the word by Richard of St. Victor, i. 162.

Interpretation, mystical, i. 33; of Philo, 64; of Bernard, 145; of Richard of St. Victor, 161; of Swedenborg, ii. 323.

Intuition, 'intellectual,' Schelling's doctrine of, i. 88; resemblance to that of Richard, 163.

Intuition, exaggeration of its claims by the Mystics, i. 168; doctrine of Emerson concerning, ii. 18; not an isolated faculty, 364.

Irony, Romanticist doctrine of, ii. 346.

Issy, the Conferences at, ii. 255; the articles of, 256, 258.

JACOBI, ii. 341.

Jean d'Avila, ii. 281.

Jelaleddin Rumi, ii. 12, 14, 15, 17, 110.

Jerusalem, Church of the New, ii. 335.

Jews, persecution of the, i. 315; their demonology, ii. 142.

John of the Cross, ii. 182; his asceticism, 183; his *Dark Night*, 185; estimate of his Mysticism, 192.

Joris, David, ii. 125.

Jubilation, the gift of, ii. 219.

Juneid, ii. 11.

Justin Martyr, ii. 42.

KANT, his practical Reason, i. 89.

Kathari, i. 184.

Kober, ii. 80.

Krüdener, Madame de, ii. 288; opinion of Madame de Genlis concerning, 289, *note*.

Kuhlmann, i. 38; ii. 125.

LABADIE, ii. 291.

La Combe, ii. 226.

Lautensack, ii. 125.

Law, William, ii. 124, 288.

Leade, Joanna, ii. 144.

Light, doctrine of the Universal, ii. 309.

Louis the Fourteenth at St. Cyr, ii. 249, 265; urges the Pope to condemn Fénélon, 271.

Love, disinterested, doctrine of Bernard, concerning, i. 145; of Eckart, 193; of Tauler, 303, 309; of Ruysbroek, 334, *note*; of the Sufis, ii. 10, 17; the central doctrine of Quietism, 204; Fénélon's doctrine of, 258; its truth and its exaggeration, 283.

Loyola, Ignatius, ii. 150.

Ludolph, the Carthusian, i. 232, 235.

Luther, Martin, his vantage ground as compared with the Mystics, i. 304; ii. 32-35; his reply concerning the Zwickau Fanatics, 45; his encounter

with them, 47 ; his protest against the Mysticism of Carlstadt, 51.

MACARIUS, i. 111.

Mahmud, passage from his *Gul-schen Ras*, ii. 24.

Maintenon, Madame de, at St. Cyr, ii. 248 ; her interest in Mme. Guyon, 249 ; her caution, 254.

Maisonfort, Madame de la, ii. 258, 282.

Malaval, ii. 243.

Margaret Ebner, i. 216.

Maria d'Agreda, controversy concerning her *Mystical City of God*, ii. 164 ; her elevations in the air, 176.

Maria of Oignys, ii. 219.

Marsay, de, ii. 291 ; his retirement to Schwartzenu, 292 ; his marriage, 293 ; his asceticism and melancholy, 294 ; his last years, 295.

Maurice, St., ii. 130.

Maxims of the Saints, ii. 263, 280.

Meditation, how defined by Hugo, i. 155.

Merswin, Rulman, his *Book of the Nine Rocks*, i. 321, 336.

Mesmer, ii. 130.

Messalians, ii. 11.

Microcosm, ii. 65.

Molinos, his *Guida Spirituale*, ii. 171, 242 ; charges against him, 180 ; his fate, 245.

Monasticism, Buddhist, i. 56 ; its Ethics, 121 ; promoted by Bernard, 140.

Montanus, i. 284.

Montfaucon, Clara de, ii. 163, 220.

More, Henry, his opinion of Behmen, ii. 124 ; his mysticism, 315 ; his opinion of the Quakers, 317, *note*.

Morin, ii. 244.

Münzer, ii. 44.

Muscatblut, i. 335.

Mysticism, the instructive character of its history, i. 13, 260 ; derivation and history of the word, 17 ; definitions, 21 ; its causes, 27-33 ; its classifications, 35 ; theopathic, 36 ; theosophic, 39 ; theurgic, 45 ; in the early East, 51 ; of the Neo-Platonists, 63 ; in the Greek Church, 109 ; in the Latin Church, 127 ; opposed

to Scholasticism, 142 ; reconciled, 154 ; Truth at its root, 164 ; its exaggeration of the truth concerning experimental evidence, 167 ; German, in the fourteenth century, 235 ; ii. 30 ; Persian, in the Middle Ages, 3 ; Theosophic, in the Age of the Reformation, 29 ; revolutionary, 37 ; before and after the Reformation, 41 ; in Spain, 147 ; of the Counter-Reformation, 150 ; of Madame Guyon, 207 ; in France and in Germany compared, 275 ; in England, 299 ; of Swedenborg, 321 ; its recent modifications, 339 ; its services to Christianity, 351 ; its prevalent misconceptions, 353 ; its correctives, 355.

NAMES, of magical virtue, ii. 140.

Neo-Platonism, eclectic and mystical, i. 70 ; difference between it and Platonism proper, 76 ; its doctrine of Emanation, 80 ; influence on Christianity, 85 ; process of degeneration, 91 ; its Theurgy, 103 ; expires with Proclus, 105 ; introduced into the Church by Dionysius, 113 ; confounds Universals with Causes, 117 ; its power in the Middle Ages, 129 ; its reformatory influence in the West, 132 ; Persian, ii. 4 ; revived on the eve of the Reformation, 55 ; at Florence, 149.

Neri, St. Philip, ii. 218.

Nicholas of Basle, i. 239 ; becomes the spiritual guide of Tauler, 240 ; his labours and fate, 359.

Night, mystical, of the Sufis, ii. 14 ; of John of the Cross, 185, 195 ; of Novalis, 349.

Nihilism, i. 332 ; of Angelus Silesius, ii. 17.

Nirwana, Buddhist Absorption, i. 56.

Nördlingen, Henry of, i. 216.

Norris of Bemerton, ii. 315.

Novalis, his Aphorisms, ii. 349 ; his *Hymns to Night*, 349.

Numenius, i., 65, 121 ; his hypostatic emanations, 82.

Nymphs, ii. 139.

OSTINGER, ii. 351.

Oken, ii. 351.

Omphalopsychi, i. 356.

Origen, i. 302.

PACHYMERES, his definition of mystical Theology, i. 24.

Pains, the mystical, ii. 170, 176.

Pantheism, Indian, i. 55; Buddhist, 56; Neo-Platonist, 78; its necessitarian Ethics, 91; of Dionysius Areopagita, 119; of Erigena, 131; of Eckart, 157, 160, 217; among the people in the fourteenth century, 201, 209, 257, 278, 331; of Angelus Silesius, ii. 6; of Emerson, 8, 22; of the Sufis, 20; cannot claim Behmen, 112, 121.

Paracelsus, i. 44; ii. 71; his four pillars of Medicine, 73; his Theory of Contraries, 74; of Signatures, 76; his Green Lion, 78; influence on Behmen, 91.

Parzival and Titurel, i. 186.

Passivity, i. 274; ii. 166, 190, 195.

Pazzi, Magdalena de, ii. 171.

Perfection, doctrine of, ii. 232; awakens the alarm of the priesthood, 240.

Persia, Neo-Platonism in, ii. 4; the seat of Sufism, 5; its mystical poetry, 16, 24.

Petrucchi, Cardinal, ii. 277.

Philadelphian Association, the, ii. 142.

Philo, i. 63; his views on the Contemplative Life, 66; his mystical interpretation, 67.

Pico of Mirandola, ii. 148.

Platonism, distinguished from Neo-Platonism, i. 76; combined with Christianity assumes five distinct phases, 147; in England, ii. 315.

Plotinus, his early history and asceticism, i. 71; hears Ammonius Saccas, 74; object and character of his philosophy, 76; doctrine concerning knowledge, 80; concerning Ecstasy, 81; influence on Christianity, 85; analogies with Schelling and Coleridge, 87; necessitarian character of his Ethics, 91; his Trinity, 93.

Poiret, Peter, ii. 287, 290.

Pordage, ii. 142.

Porphyry, his position, i. 94; moderates the doctrine of Plotinus concerning Ecstasy, 97; his modern imitators, ii. 350.

Postel, ii. 125.

Prayer, Theresa's Four Degrees of, ii. 167; of Silence, Mme. Guyon's, 233.

Proclus, i. 105; influence of his philosophy on Dionysius, 112, 114; his endeavour renewed by Romanticism, ii. 346.

Protestantism, its Mystics compared with those of Rome, ii. 95, 308, *note*.

QUAKERS, see George Fox; their asceticism, ii. 309; their doctrine of the Universal and Saving Light, 309; of perceptible spiritual influence, 313; of Silence and Quiet, 314; opinion of Henry More concerning, 317.

Quiet, Theresa's prayer of, ii. 167.

Quietism, licentious form of it in the fourteenth century, i. 258; of Molinos and Theresa, ii. 172; charged with excluding the conception of Christ's Humanity, 172; misrepresentations of its enemies, 173, *note*; of John of the Cross, 190; its doctrine of pure love, 204; its holy indifference, 205; its reaction against mercenary religion, 232; of Fénelon, 258; in the hands of the Inquisition, 276; its doctrine of disinterested Love discussed, 283; practical, among the Quakers, 314; in the present day, 356.

RABIA, ii. 10.

Ranters, ii. 306.

Rapture, see Ecstasy.

Realism, i. 130, 149.

Reason, how enlisted in the service of Mysticism, i. 40; how far forsaken by Plotinus, 80; Intuitive, of Coleridge, 88; Practical, of Kant, 89; unduly subordinated by Bernard 141; erroneously divorced from Understanding, ii. 361.

Redemption, doctrine of Behmen

- concerning, ii. 116 ; of Swedenborg, 332 ; misconceptions of, 334.
- Reformation, relation of Mysticism to the, ii. 33.
- Reformers, their relation to the Mystics, ii. 41.
- Regeneration, Tauler's doctrine of, i. 246 ; mistake of Mme. Guyon concerning, ii. 230.
- Reimar of Zweter, i. 186.
- 'Relations, Memorable,' of Swedenborg, ii. 329.
- Reminiscence, Platonic, i. 77.
- Ricci, Catherine, ii. 219.
- Richard of St. Victor, his Mystical Interpretation, i. 161 ; his Degrees of Contemplation, 162 ; his Doctrine of Ecstasy, 163.
- Richter, Primarius, at Görlitz, ii. 86, 98.
- Romanism, turns Mysticism to account, i. 365 ; ii. 355.
- Romanticism, Tieck, its best representative, ii. 343, *note* ; opposes Rationalism, 344 ; its philosophy of life, 345 ; its doctrine of Irony, 346 ; subsides in Superstition, 347.
- Rome, Church of, her Mystics compared with those of Protestantism, ii. 95 ; her debt to Mysticism, 149 ; Fénelon no fair sample of her Mystics, 356.
- Rosenkreuz, ii. 132.
- Rosicrucians, ii. 128 ; pretended discovery of the, 132, 136.
- Rousseau, J. J., ii. 179.
- Ruysbroek, his *Spiritual Nuptials*, i. 321 ; visited by Tauler at the Convent of Grünthal, 325 ; his doctrines concerning the Trinity, Abstraction, Union, 326, 329 ; his protest against false Mystics, 330, *note* ; his doctrine concerning disinterested Love, 334, *note* ; charged by Gerson with Pantheism, 338 ; compared with contemporary Mystics, 338.
- ALAMANDERS, ii. 138.
- Schelling, compared with Behmen, i. 41 ; his Philosophy of Identity, 44 ; analogies of Plotinus with, 87 ; indebted to Behmen, ii. 124 ; his doctrine of Unconsciousness, 351.
- Schlegel, Frederick, his admiration of Behmen, ii. 124 ; his Romanticism, 345 ; his extravagance, 346.
- Schlegel, A. W., ii. 348.
- Schleiermacher, ii. 341, 343, *note*.
- Scholasticism, opposed to Mysticism, i. 142 ; reconciled, 154.
- Schröpfer, ii. 130.
- Schwenkfeld, ii. 50.
- Science, its mystical character in the Middle Age, i. 41 ; in the Age of the Reformation, ii. 53 ; union with Religion, 67.
- Self-annihilation, Tauler concerning, i. 250 ; of the Sufis and Angelus Silesius, ii. 16.
- Self-love, ii. 214.
- Shemhamphorash, ii. 141.
- Silence, Quaker practice of, ii. 314 ; Mme. Guyon's Prayer of, 233.
- Sleep, sacred, i. 102.
- Societies, secret, ii. 136.
- Soul, its twofold life, according to Iamblichus, i. 102 ; Spark of the, 190 ; Ground of the, Tauler's doctrine concerning, 246, 255, 291 ; Theresa's Flight of the, ii. 174.
- Spain, Mysticism in, ii. 150, 152.
- Spark of the Soul, i. 190.
- Sperber, ii. 125.
- Spirit, perceptible Influence of the, i. 272 ; as taught by the Quakers, ii. 313 ; witness of the, 314 ; Swedenborg's doctrine concerning the, 331.
- Spiritualism, its revival of antiquated errors, ii. 350 ; its morbid dread of historic reality, 365.
- Staupitz, ii. 33.
- Stilling, Jung, i. 39 ; ii. 289.
- Strasburg, Godfrey of, i. 186 ; rival houses in, 187 ; under the Interdict, 213 ; Revolution in, 218 ; Black Death in, 313 ; the Flagellants in, 317 ; resists the Imperial Impost, 319.
- Sufis, the, ii. 3 ; their early leaders, 11 ; analogies with Emerson, 16 ; with Angelus Silesius, 17 ; their doctrine concerning disinterested Love, 17 ; their allegorical lyrics, 24.
- Suso, Heinrich, i. 341 ; his austerities, 344 ; his *Horologe of Wisdom*, 345 ; pursued as a poisoner, 348 ; his adventure with the robber, 351.

Swedenborg, Emanuel, ii. 321; comprehensive character of his Mysticism, 322; his doctrine of correspondences, 323; position of Man in his System, 325; scientific character of his Mysticism, 326; opposed to Asceticism, 328; his Memorable Relations, 329; his descriptions of the unseen World, 330; his doctrine of Spiritual Influence, 331; of the Work of Christ, 332; of the New Jerusalem, 335.

Sylphs, ii. 139.

Symbolism, of Philo, i. 64; of Dionysius, 114; of Richard of St. Victor, 161; how far necessary, ii. 353.

Sympathies, Science of, ii. 63.

Synderesis, i. 256, 327.

TALMUD, its Theurgy, ii. 141.
Tanchelm, i. 38.

Tauler, i. 192, 216, 224, 265; Sermon on the Image of God, 226; his cautions to Mystics, 228; disappearance for two years, 230; his restoration, 234; he issues circulars and treatises comforting the excommunicated, 236; passages from his Sermons, 244-251, 290; concerning the 'Ground' of the Soul, 246, 255, 291; excellences and defects of his Theology, 251; elevated character of his Mysticism, 253; prepares the way for the Reformation, 253; compared with Eckart, 254, 302; his doctrine of Abandonment, and the state above Grace, 255; his internal Trinity, 255; on Work of Christ, 300; summoned before the Emperor, 318; retires to Cologne, 319.

Tears, gift of, ii. 220.

Theologia Germanica, i. 148, 288, 367.

Theologia Mystica, i. 21; definitions, 23.

Theosophy, i. 40; in the age of the Reformation, ii. 29, 69, *note*; of Swedenborg, 321.

Therapeutæ, i. 66, 67.

Theresa, St., her early life, ii. 153; her reform of the Carmelite order, 155; sensuous character of her Mysticism, 162; her four degrees

of Prayer, 167; her Raptures, 170; her Torments, 170; compared with Madame Guyon, 234.

Theurgy, i. 46; of Neo-Platonism, 105; Lutheran, ii. 59; Modern, 130; Rabbinical, 141.

Thomas à Kempis, i. 367.

Tieck, ii. 343, *note*, 348.

Tophail, Abu Jaafer Ebn, ii. 299.

Trinity, of Plotinus, i. 93; Tauler's doctrine of the internal, 256, 291; doctrine of Ruysbroek concerning, 326; of Behmen, ii. 103, 104, *note*; of Swedenborg, 332.

UNDERSTANDING, its relation to Reason, ii. 361; not to be discarded in religion, 365.

Undine, ii. 138.

Union, doctrine of Plotinus concerning, i. 81; of Bernard, 144; of Richard of St. Victor, 163; of Ruysbroek, 329; Prayer of, ii. 168; Swedenborg's doctrine concerning, 334.

Universals, confounded with Causes, by Neo-Platonism, i. 171.

VALDES, ii. 244.

Veronica of Binasco, ii. 220.

Vespiniani, Countess, ii. 277.

Victor, St., see Hugo and Richard.

Victor, St., the school of, i. 153.

Vincula, Theurgic, ii. 59.

Virtues, divided into human and superhuman, i. 121; how classified by Aquinas, 123.

Visions, intellectual and representative, ii. 174; doctrine of John of the Cross concerning, 189.

'Visio caliginosa,' ii. 179.

WALTER, Balthasar, ii. 80.

Weigel, Valentine, ii. 51;

studied by Behmen, 90, 92, 117.

Werner, Zachariah, ii. 347.

Wessel, John, ii. 33.

Wolfram von Eschenbach, i. 186.

Woolman, John, ii. 305.

Words, 'substantial,' ii. 175, 229.

YOGIS, the, i. 57.

Yokhdan, Hai Ebn, history of, ii.
299 ; his practice of contemplation,
311.

Yvon, ii. 291.

ZANONI, ii. 128.

Zerbino, Prince, by Tieck, ii.
343, *note*.

Zinzendorf, ii. 308.

Zwickau, the fanatics of, ii. 44.

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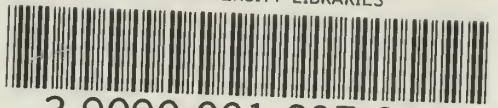
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